Fugitive Femininity:

Runaway Women and Performative Freedom in Antebellum North Carolina

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Senior Honors Thesis

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April 28, 2018

"I am not aware of any good cause of her leaving save the love of liberty"
-*Wilmington Chronicle*, 11 August 1847, page 1 and *The Weekly Raleigh Register and North Carolina Gazette*, 8 September 1847, page 1

"I am not aware of any good cause for her leaving, save the love of liberty,"[1] her "master" declared. Who was this woman who dared to be free in a system that denied the validity of that right? To brave the terrain of the runaway was to deny the restrictions of place and time created by slaveholders to govern enslaved women's lives. Further, runaway women were not afforded the safety provided by societal perceptions of race and gender in "freedom," as accepted forms of these constructs were relegated to black men or to white women. Running away from Southampton county in Virginia and seen later in Weldon (North Carolina), this woman confounded her legal owner's understanding of the use of location to physically express her love of liberty. Martha Payn—or would she prefer we call her Elizabeth Scott?—was a woman known by three names.[2] Her use of multiple aliases is important because it shows one method of redefining the self that enslaved and runaway women used. Her ability to navigate multiple personas, especially the use of the alias Martha Payn after absconding, indicates an ability to gauge others' perceptions of her and graft her actions to expectations set forth by observers. This alias may have helped her to "attempt to disguise herself," as "some *worthless* white man" was suspected of giving her a free pass. A free pass would have afforded Elizabeth greater mobility by providing the appearance of legal freedom to anyone who questioned her status.

Additionally, Elizabeth Scott's "proper name is ELIZABETH," meaning that Scott was a surname she adopted for herself as she "sometimes calls herself Elizabeth Scott." Elizabeth

[1] *Wilmington Chronicle*, August 11, 1847, page 1. See also *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette*, September 8, 1847, 1.

[2] The subscriber wrote that "her proper name is ELZABETH, and sometimes calls herself Elizabeth Scott." This means that the surname of Scott created an identity that was separate from what her "master" viewed her as. Therefore, she had at least three aliases.

Scott's use of a surname, both while enslaved and on the lam, represented a claim to agency as runaway "often changed their names to signify their new identities as free people."[3] Her use of a surname orally defied the premise of slave ownership while simultaneously manipulating concepts of women as men's property via the adoption of husbands' surnames. Elizabeth Scott could manipulate spaces of enslavement with a surname (and later an alias) that established a public persona where she feigned conformity to the ideals of femininity set forth by the slaveholding class. Elizabeth manipulated this public persona to hide her true self, thereby making her femininity a fugitive from the slaveholding class.

Elizabeth's experience as "a first-rate sempstress and laundress" and her qualification of being "well skilled in every department of household business" gave Elizabeth more geographic and social terrain to navigate. Women who were tasked with household duties or occasional travel could gain access to sympathetic white people who were potentially willing to abet them in their escape. Additionally, these roles increased instances in which enslaved women's geographic knowledge could expand due to their off-farm tasks. This was an even greater possibility in the upper South.[4] Elizabeth's ability to "read print" further expanded her social terrain and allowed her to manipulate perceptions of class because of the limited numbers of literate slaves. Not only do these instances show Elizabeth's ability to manipulate presentations of herself, but they also indicate that she was a shrewd woman.

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[3] Amani Marshall, "They Will Endeavor to Pass for Free: Enslaved Runaways' Performances of Freedom in Antebellum South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 31, no. 2 (2010): 175, 10.1080/01440391003711065.

[4] For more on roles that provided women the opportunity to expand their social terrain and geographic knowledge see Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 30-31.

Historians' studies of runaway slaves have found that about 80% of runaways were men and 20% were women.[5] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger emphasize that enslaved women were constrained by their familial ties. They state that women's low percentage in the runaway population as compared to the enslaved population was because "they had often begun to raise families by their late teens and early twenties."[6] Stephanie Camp emphasizes the importance of domestic work combined with a "second shift of labor [that] was a greater and more consistent burden [than for men]"[7] as the limiting factors of women's potential to run away.[8] These interpretations are a problem because they relegate enslaved women to positions that were not universal. Further, these interpretations do not account for the full array of women who did runaway. This historiographical tendency to speak of enslaved and runaway women only in terms of their relationships to their families and "masters" limits understanding of their

[5] These are approximate percentages for runaway slave gender composition based on Freddie L. Parker, *Running for Freedom: Slave Runaways in North Carolina 1775-1840*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993): 69 and John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 211. Scholarship on enslaved women's forms of resistance have tended to focus on resistance while remaining physically enslaved and as truants. Deborah Gray White addressed both of these in her chapter "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," in *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*, ed. Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice, (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy and University of Virginia Press, 1991), 100-187. More recently, Stephanie Camp has addressed the use of space in patterns of resistance among enslaved women in the South. See Camp, *Closer to Freedom*. Amani Marshall has addressed strategic uses of enslavement and freedom among runaways in antebellum North Carolina. See Marshall, "'They Will Endeavor to Pass for Free.'" Passing for free cannot be examined without an inclusion of racial perceptions and the consequences of passing as someone who was not a part of the community to which they belonged and oftentimes loved. Allyson Hobbs has written much on the consequences of racial passing throughout American history. For her chapter on racial passing while enslaved see "White is the Color of Freedom," in *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 28-70.

[6] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 212.

[7] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 33.

[8] Camp, "A Geography of Containment: The Bondage of Space and Time," *Closer to Freedom*, 12-34.

individuality. While historians have by no means intentionally created a depersonalized approach to studying enslaved and runaway women, the overarching themes of existing studies combine to omit the uniqueness of each individual woman's experiences. Runaway slave advertisements combined with narratives written by women such as Harriet Jacobs provide enough primary sources to interpret the importance of these women's individuality within their communities. Focus on individuality in this study is meant to build upon existing literature on enslaved and runaway women within their communities. This improves understanding of the importance women's individual attributes held in crafting strategies for running away and how their individuality played into their relationships with others.

Elizabeth Scott's use of alias presents just one instance in which runaway women could use their personal attributes to manipulate understandings of themselves. These manipulations were vital as they were used to manipulate terrains of ideology to gain, maintain, and assert agency while enslaved and free. The complexity of runaway women's varying stories and their shared self-determination that emerges from runaway slave advertisements reshape understanding of what life was like for runaway women whether they were enslaved or on the lam. Their commitment to themselves breaks with common interpretations of these women as relational beings to their owners and families. Their acts of regulating their own agency, and how they arrived at that goal, produce questions about the manipulation of identities including race, class, and gender. Runaway slave advertisements document runaway women's use of their attributes to identify themselves as individuals within slave and slave-owning communities.[9]

[9] Runaway slave advertisements are embroiled with interpretive issues because they were very often written by the very people who enslaved these women. They are a form of propaganda against these women which intended to release enough information on them for them to be captured and returned to their legal owners. Whether information on the individual women was provided by the owner him- or herself, by field overseers, or by fellow enslaved people, the

This shows a diverse array of strategic choices, both while they were enslaved and after they had run away, which document more than just their families and legal owners. Enslaved and runaway women used their individual attributes to create physical and symbolic manifestations of black femininity. Acting against the spatial limitations of enslavement, these women manipulated gender assumptions of the slave and slaveholding communities in their escape strategies. Their portrayals of black womanhood went beyond others' understand of them as mothers to depict these women as individuals within a broader community.

Historiography

Studies on runaway slaves have focused on overarching themes of absconding method and the experiences of runaway men. Those that situate women within the unique structures that confined their physical mobility do not adequately account for women who did run away. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger's study *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* provides ample information on trends in runaways throughout the South, yet too easily dismisses the experiences of runaway women and enslaved women as dependent upon the needs of their children, children that sometimes exist(ed) only in the minds of historians. Franklin and Schweninger state that "slave women desired freedom as much as slave men and were often as assertive and aggressive on the plantation as male slaves."[10] Taking this into account, the

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descriptions of women in these advertisements are formed through an observation of these women as property. However, the advertisements are still rather frank in their descriptions of the women because their ultimate goal was to reobtain the missing "property." For further reading on interpreting runaway slave advertisements and insight to the role digital databases play in shaping historian's understandings of these primary sources seem Tom Costa, "What Can We Learn from a Digital Database of Runaway Slave Advertisements?," in *International Social Science Review* 76, no 2 (2001): 36-43.

[10] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 212.

historians explain women's limited numbers within their survey of runaway slaves as due to their roles as mothers beginning in their late teens. Having established the normal age range of men and women who ran away as in their teens and twenties, Franklin and Schweninger's line of reasoning is a coherent conclusion. However, the variety of women's experiences found within the advertisements indicate that such uniform reasoning cannot be broadly applied to explain women's limited percentage in the runaway population.

Freddie Parker's work *Running for Freedom: Slave Runaways in North Carolina 1775-1840* provides a vital overview of runaway's experiences in North Carolina during his period, but centers around the male experience. Parker's survey of runaways in North Carolina reaches the same conclusions as Franklin and Schweninger regarding the limited percentage of runaway women. In fact, Parker is quoted by Franklin and Schweninger for his notation that "though [enslaved women] desired freedom as much as men, the task of uprooting and taking a child or children in flight was onerous, time-consuming, and exhaustive."[11] Thus, the two historical surveys that address women runaway's experiences dismiss their individuality and the importance it played in determining their strategies of escape. Even though the data on runaway women is limited, both *Runaway Slaves* and *Running for Freedom* are seminal works in the study of runaway and enslaved people in the American South and North Carolina, respectively.

Several historians including Deborah Gray White, have begun to fill in the gaps left by Franklin and Schweninger and Parker. One of White's most important findings is that a separate slave community existed for women. It was both separate from enslaved men and from whites. This separate community "schooled its members in survival, helped and protected them when

[11] Parker, *Running for Freedom*, 71. For Franklin and Schweninger's paraphrase and quotation of Parker's conclusions see *Runaway Slaves*, 212.

possible, but most of all gave its women the opportunity to forge independent ideas about womanhood."[12] This idea is central to understanding the variety and uniqueness of individual slave experiences and the collective actions of the slave community. However, White does not elaborate on enslave women's shaping of their femininity as individuals. White connects individuality of enslaved women to their children and husbands, implying their "independence" was dependent on these relationships. White asserts that "no doubt the most important lesson [enslaved women communities] taught was that their central role was one of motherhood."[13] While White omitted the full importance women's individuality, she established the importance of enslaved women's relationships. Motherhood was a central part of women's lives but is was not their entire lives. Additionally, White's coverage of the relationships enslaved women held with one another introduced understand of how these women could identify their individual womanhood by relying on each other.

Enslaved women took advantages of the brief moments when they could "flaunt their femininity."[14] These moments were usually reserved for Sundays, holidays, and festivities when they wore their fine clothes, wore perfume, and took time to present their hair in ways that differed from the braids that they usually wore while laboring.[15] White explains the individuality enslaved women displayed through these special occasions, by focusing on how women's self-presentations could lead to intimate relationships with enslaved men. White's concern in this portion of her scholarship is to delve into ways that intimate relationships and marriages were sought after and sustained by enslaved women, noting that these relationships were nowhere near

[12] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 117.
[13] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 117.
[14] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 118.
[15] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 118-119.

as important as relationships with their children. White notes that enslaved women found agency through their marriages and familial lives because the egalitarian nature of enslaved family life meant that "a woman in many cases exercised considerable autonomy within her marriage."[16] White's scholarship discovered women's abilities to create symbolic space to exert agency within their relationships. However, by virtue of focusing on women as they related to enslaved and enslaving people, White's work leaves the full possibility of enslave women as individuals and enslaved women without children or husbands open to interpretation.

Several historians have followed White's scholarship on motherhood and pleasure to further delve into the intricacies of enslaved women's relationships to their children. Jennifer L. Morgan, Wilma King, and Jacqueline Jones have discussed motherhood in depth, adding variation to White's work. Jennifer Morgan's research focuses on the institutionalization of reproductive labor in the American South and how race and gender were linked in the colonial period to produce the identity of woman as only accessible to whites of a certain class. Morgan further incorporates West African heritage and identity to highlight variation in enslaved women's experiences based on location. Morgan focuses on the uses of imagery to institutionalize race, work, and sex as prime characteristics of enslavements. Similarly, Jones's scholarship looks at the use of field and reproductive slave work to create images of enslaved black women as beings of a neutral gender. She emphasizes the relationship between mothers and children that emerged in slavery to claim that all women's work is of a dual nature so long as it occurs in a patriarchal, capitalist society.[17] Therefore, Jones is concerned with making

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[16] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 121.

[17] Jacqueline Jones, "'My Mother Was Much of a Woman,' Slavery, 1830-1860," in *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to Present* (Basic Books, 2009), 10.

connections between slavery's core structures and its descendants. Beyond examining the variation of free black women's experiences throughout the North and South prior to the Civil War, Wilma King has examined the restructuring of enslaved women's mothering patterns from African traditions to norms that codified slaveowners' views of enslaved women as assets of productive and reproductive labor. The research of Morgan, Jones, and King expands understanding of links between sexuality, race, and gender that confined enslaved women in the eyes of their slaveowners. They also provide a foundation for understanding women's experience as productive and reproductive laborers while leaving room for exploration of enslaved and runaway women as individuals.

Enslaved women's experiences are vital for understanding the experiences of runaway women. Building on knowledge gained while enslaved, runaways used their personal characteristics to manipulate presentations of themselves. Historian Amani Marshall explores Charlestonian runaways' use of race and freedom as defined by a slaveholding class to examine ways in which runaways established and maintained freedom in a highly populated city. Both enslaved and runaway women utilized various facets of defined respectability to create space for themselves to live within various identities. As Marshall notes, by using personal aspects like attire, carriage, and language, enslaved people "rejected their enslaved status and became free people, if only for a while. It is thus necessary to reconceptualise freedom and the ways in which enslaved men and women perceived it."[18] Reconceptualizing freedom, or rather reframing agency of the enslaved, requires an understanding of the individuality that afforded each enslaved woman the possibility of materializing spaces through the construction of personas.

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[18] Amani Marshall, "'They Will Endeavor to Pass for Free': Enslaved Runaways' Performances of Freedom in Antebellum South Carolina," in *Slavery & Abolition* 31, no. 2 (2010): 176, 10.1080/01440391003711065.

Marshall's analysis of runaway women in Charleston's manipulation of expectations for free and enslaved women pushes a conversation regarding their agency from one focused on their relationships to one focused on their individuality.

Many historians have written on the phenomenon of runaway slaves passing as white. Most focus on the positive aspects race passing held for runaways based on the possibility of become "free" through performing whiteness in the most literal manner. Allyson Hobbs has worked to trouble that notion. Hobbs's perspective upends understanding of gender performance as a potential without negative consequences and introduces a much needed analysis of skin tone and passing. As Hobbs notes, "passing is an exile, sometimes chosen, sometimes not."[19] Runaway women in this exile were forced to detach themselves from their families and wider communities, a phenomenon that many runaways experience. However, women who passed as white had to leave behind the symbolic portions of their community as well. Physically white-passing runaways performed the culturally normative acts of white people at the expense of leaving behind the cultural tendencies and traditions of both enslaved and free black communities. Acts of running away held enormous physical and emotional consequences. If successful, the act of passing as white alienated physically and symbolically white-passing runaway women from the communities that had structured their social and personal lives.

Stephanie Camp focused on ways that space regulated enslave women's patterns of resistance. Enslavement, Camp established, was based on regulation of physical spaces that determined where and how slaves could move. Enslaved people created rival geographies, spaces "for private and public creative expression, rest and recreation, alternative communication, and

[19] Allyson Hobbs, "Prologue: To Live a Life Somewhere Else," in *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 4.

importantly, resistance to planters' domination of slaves' every move."[20] These alternate spaces used physical space in a manner that was counter to slaveholders' usage of geography. Camp focuses her study, *Closer to Freedom*, on how "places, boundaries, and movement were central to how slavery was organize and to how it was resisted."[21] Camp's focus on usages of space incorporated enslaved women's manipulation of physical space to create instances and opportunities of resistance.

Stephanie Camp defined enslaved people's bodies as one site with at least three meanings. The first of these bodies was "a site of domination,"[22] which was acted upon by slaveholders to ensure continued enslavement through "strict control of the black body."[23] Camp's remaining bodies were sites utilized by the enslaved themselves. The second of the three sites was a "vehicle of feelings of terror, humiliation, and pain."[24] This second body was used as a site for the enslaved person to experience the actions that accompanied a slaveowner's use of the first body. The third body was "a thing to be claimed and enjoyed, a site of pleasure and resistance."[25] This site of the enslaved body was used by women not only as "a source of pleasure, pride, and self-expression,"[26] but also as a political tool in which the enslaved launched a war of ownership with the slaveowner. Therefore, enslaved women's bodies became a type of symbolic terrain that they used to express their own femininity while shielding themselves from slaveowners.

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[20] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 7.
[21] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 6.
[22] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 66.
[23] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 66.
[24] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 67.
[25] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 68.
[26] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 68.

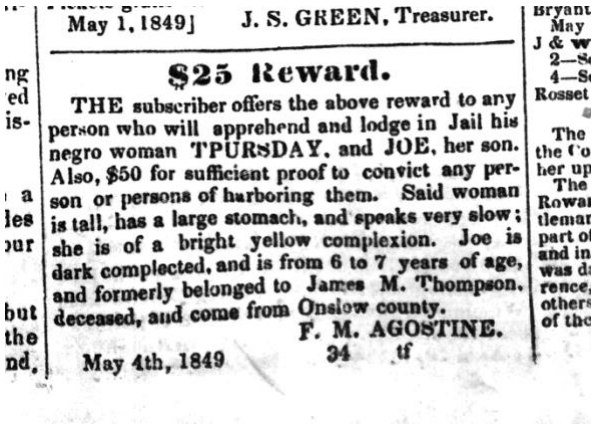
These studies have left open the need and opportunity for further research on enslaved and runaway women as individuals. By examining the runaway slave advertisements for women, it becomes evident that their individual attributes helped shape outsiders' perceptions of them. These advertisements reveal manipulations of their own characteristics to navigate slaveholders' expectations of their enslaved lives and outsiders' perceptions of their performances of freedom once on the lam. Expanding Marshall's understanding of runaways' ability to perform freedom and reimagining Camp's physical usages of space and bodies to include the symbolic, this study builds upon existing literature regarding enslaved and runaway women's experience as individuals.

Methodology

This study includes 172 runaway women described in runaway slave advertisements and in jailor advertisements if they were apprehended after absconding.[27] Most of the advertisements used in this dataset are runaway slave advertisements placed by the legal owners of the women. Some of the advertisements were written by agents of the legal owners. Twelve of the

[27] To better understand and identify patterns of choice and experience among the 172 women included in this study, a spreadsheet was created to house transcriptions of the advertisements and categories of information found within the ads. These categories include age, description of physical features, complexion, speech pattern, description of character and attitude, aid in and/or method of running away, solo flight, duo flight, group flight, accompanying children, and non-abscondee relations. Each of these categories improves the understanding of these runaway women's experiences by providing a variety of information on literal and figurative tools they could use to shape their identities through representations of gender, class, and race. Categories within this study provide a better understanding of the ways in which physical features, manipulation of the body, and temporal features could be advantageous to forming personas that runaway and enslaved women used to navigate symbolic terrain to shape their own agency.

advertisements are jailors notices published to notify the public and, in the hopes of the jailor, the legal owner of the woman. There is only one woman for whom both a runaway slave advertisement and a jailor's notice appeared. On May 4, 1849, an advertisement appeared for Thursday who ran away with her son, aged between 6 and 7 years.[28] It was supposed that they would aim for Onslow county as this is where they "come from." Thursday was taken up "on Thursday, 13th day of September [1849]"[29] and "committed to the Jail of Bladen county." Thursday was in custody for almost four months before an advertisement was published in the *Wilmington Journal* for "the legal owner of said slave…to come forward, prove property, pay charges, and take her away." There was no mention of Joe's fate.



May 1, 1849] J. S. GREEN, Treasurer.

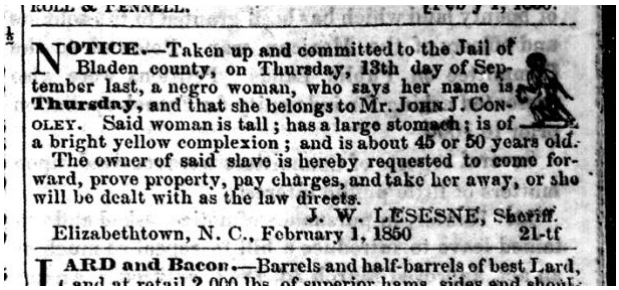
$25 Reward.

THE subscriber offers the above reward to any person who will apprehend and lodge in Jail his negro woman THURSDAY, and JOE, her son. Also, $50 for sufficient proof to convict any person or persons of harboring them. Said woman is tall, has a large stomach, and speaks very slow; she is of a bright yellow complexion. Joe is dark complected, and is from 6 to 7 years of age, and formerly belonged to James M. Thompson, deceased, and come from Onslow county.

F. M. AGOSTINE.

May 4th, 1849 34 tf

Runaway slave advertisement placed for Thursday and her son, Joe. *This advertisement was published in the* Wilmington Journal *on 4 May 1849, page 3.*



NOTICE.—Taken up and committed to the Jail of Bladen county, on Thursday, 13th day of September last, a negro woman, who says her name is **Thursday**, and that she belongs to Mr. JOHN J. CONOLEY. Said woman is tall; has a large stomach; is of a bright yellow complexion; and is about 45 or 50 years old. The owner of said slave is hereby requested to come forward, prove property, pay charges, and take her away, or she will be dealt with as the law directs.

J. W. LESESNE, Sheriff.

Elizabethtown, N. C., February 1, 1850 21-tf

LARD and Bacon.—Barrels and half-barrels of best Lard,

Jailor's notice for Thursday. *Published in the* Wilmington Journal *1 February 1850, page 3.*

Space is an attribute of enslavement that must be taken into account when studying runaway slaves or mobility. North Carolina provided a unique set of opportunities for runaway women and enslaved women to shape their choices in embracing and performing their womanhood. There are two concepts of space included in this study: physical and symbolic. While this is typically referred to in terms of women's use of the two forms of space to manipulate gender and enslavement, it was also implemented to choose women included in the

[28] *Wilmington Journal*, May 4, 1849, 3.
[29] *Wilmington Journal*, February 1, 1850, 3.

study. Advertisements where women were stated to have run away from or jailed in a location within the state's boundaries were included because of their confirmed physical presence in North Carolina. Women who were mentioned as having been spotted in North Carolina also fit the category of physically being a runaway woman in North Carolina. The women who were suspected of running away to North Carolina were symbolic runaways within the state because they may or may not have physically appeared in the state while a fugitive but there is reason to believe that they would try to make it to North Carolina. Women whose advertisements did not identify why a location in North Carolina was home to the publishing paper of the advertisement are included because of what the advertisement implies. Publishing an advertisement in a newspaper meant that the subscriber had reason to believe consumers of the ads may have come across the described runaway woman. Therefore, even if not explicitly stated, all advertisements for runaway women in North Carolina newspapers imply there was a likelihood that these women were in the state as fugitives. Regardless of whether this possibility physically materialized, advertisements symbolically placed these women within the state, both by publishing details about how they presented themselves to others and by implying that these women had the potential to maintain their forged definitions of freedom within the state. Therefore, these women depict the opportunities they created for themselves within the state and the possibilities for enslaved and runaway women to define themselves.

Runaway and enslaved women's abilities to manipulate their individual attributes to create various images of black womanhood for themselves is grounded on an interpretation of gender as a performative act. Judith Butler's theory of gender performance holds that gender is not a choice but that one can manipulate their own attributes to look more or less like one gender. Butler states that "performativity has to do with repetition, very often the repetition of

oppressive and painful gender norms to force [the performer] to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in."[30] In the case of enslaved and runaway women, shaping their physical and symbolic bodies to perform womanhood meant that they repeatedly employed notions of gender ascribed to white women and reimagined what it meant to be both black and women. Butler's theory holds that "in order to identify as 'woman,' it is necessary to background or refuse masculine identification."[31] This was especially true for enslaved and runaway women who were often viewed as masculine by a slaveholding class, which used this "attribute" of enslaved women as a sort of justification for their enslavement.[32] Enslaved women also needed to redefine womanhood within the slave community, as black women were often viewed in terms of their families. Therefore, performing gender in this context means an exaggeration of the individual's attributes to portray oneself as more feminine than expected. While women did this in some sense to prove themselves as women to others, the performance of gender within an enslaved context was much more important as a means of creating symbolic spaces of agency for the enslaved woman.

Like the approach to space, women's bodies are addressed in terms of both the physical and symbolic. Their physical bodies constituted that which was material, could be touched, and easily changed through dress. Creating agency for the physical body was achieved through acts such as running away from their physical sites of enslavement, manipulating symptoms of illness, or becoming pregnant as a means of obtaining a lighter workload.[33] Stephanie Camp's

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[30] Judith Butler, "The Body You Want," interview by Liz Kotz, *Artforum* (1992): 84.
[31] Butler, "The Body You Want," 88.
[32] White, Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 109.
[33] For more information on manipulating symptoms to create spaces of agency see White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 111-112. For more on pregnancy as a strategic choice see White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 104.

interpretation of the three or more bodies held by a slave aligns with a physical understanding of bodies. Creating agency for the symbolic body meant creating emotional distance from certain aspects of enslavement. The interpretation of symbolic bodies is reached through a reimaging of Stephanie Camp's described bodily manipulation. It is reached through an understanding that the symbolic self can never be a separate entity from the physical body, but that it contains different possibilities and ways of being than exist in the purely physical self.

Racial and coloring terminology for enslaved women is limited and limiting. Throughout this study enslaved and runaway women are referred to as "black" and their manifestations of how they saw themselves as "black femininity" or "black womanhood." This inherently conjures the wrong image. These women's complexions ranged vastly, which is discussed later in greater detail. There is no term that can accurately encompass the women who fall under these umbrellas. "Negro" and "colored" are antiquated and at times reenact the violence of slavery. Additionally, "negro" and "African-American" exclude or minimize the experiences mulatta, mustee, or otherwise identified enslaved women. It is incredibly frustrating that there is no term which can accurately encompass and convey the variation involved in understanding their womanhood as an individual yet collective action or way of being. Yet it is fitting that this far beyond their time they are indefinable as a collective because their individual takes on womanhood are so indomitable. The lack of a proper or accurate term to diminish these women to one concept reflects the agency they commanded during their lifetimes and, perhaps, reproduces the frustrations held by slaveowners at their inability to subdue these women's uniqueness.

Within the slave and free black communities, acceptable forms of womanhood were tied to children and community. As the historiography of enslaved and runaway women's

experiences has established, the community was an integral part of enslaved women's lives. Enslaved women were expected by the black community to care for their children. Children whose parents ran away created a burden on those in the slave community who remained enslaved because the children could not properly care for themselves. When children were left by their runaway mothers, their enslaved family members took on the burden of caring for them, which increased the work load of the enslaved people the woman left behind. The children who were left behind were not always cared for and "slave women knew that children without mothers could easily be neglected."[34] While this knowledge kept some mothers from running away, it did not prevent all. Harriet Jacobs's grandmother's reaction to realizing that Harriet was absconding without her children exemplifies one of the expectations enslaved and free black communities had for women's displays of womanhood. Jacobs's grandmother pled with her granddaughter to "stand by your own children, and suffer with them till death. Nobody respects a mother who forsakes her children; and if you leave them, you will never have a happy moment."[35] Therefore, womanhood within a black community context was based first on the relationships women held with their children and second on the relationships to the broader community. Appeals to aid from enslaved and free black communities were dependent on the quality of contributions that women made to these communities prior to running away.

Acceptable notions of black womanhood from a white and slaveholding perspective were dependent on an understanding of race and gender as separate and distinct identities. Runaway women's abilities to "[enjoy and maintain] their liberties required a performance of whiteness, wherein they embraced the culture and ideals of the white slaveholding class."[36] In this sense,

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[34] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South" 106.
[35] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* 139.
[36] White, "'They Will Endeavor to Pass for Free,'" 165.

runaway women had to perform actions that made them appear as if they were "transcending" race to become women. Even prior to the colonial era, "slaveowners' images and beliefs about race and savagery were indelibly marked on women's bodies."[37] Many slaveowners who exploited enslaved women's reproductive capacity viewed black women as promiscuous beings, creating a dichotomy in slaveholders' minds that painted enslaved women as oversexed while white women were viewed as emblems of white purity.[38] However, women were able to cross the perceived boundary of race if their performances of gender closely mimicked that of perceived black promiscuity or white purity.

Sojourner Truth spoke about the difficulty of "proving" herself as a woman after she escaped. "Proving" herself required her to work past the white stereotype typically applied to black women as "marked female (animal, sexualized, and without rights), but not as woman (human, potential wife, conduit for the name of father)."[39] This means that enslaved women's "feminine" aspects were oftentimes viewed by slave owners only in terms of their reproductive capacity. To do this, Truth presented herself as a woman while challenging the assumed stereotype of many white people that to be a woman one had to perform whiteness. Sojourner Truth addressed the inequality facing black women by appealing to white women's sympathies in her speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. Truth stated:

> "I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed,

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[37] Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004; ProQuest), 7.

[38] For further readings on the way race was intended to be solidified as a dichotomy that regulated slavery see Mary Niall Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So it Seemed," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (September 2002): 369-410, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2002.027.

[39] Donna Haraway, "Ecce Homo, Ain't (Ar'n't) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Others: The Human in a Post-Humanist Landscape," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 93.

> and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal…I am as strong as any man that is now. As for intellect, all I can say is, if a woman have a pint and a man a quart—why can't she have her little pint full?"[40]

By beginning her statement with the affirmation that she was "woman's rights," Truth refused to allow convention attendees to question her womanhood. Having established the validity of her womanhood, Truth questioned white concepts of womanhood and strict gender division by pointing out the masculine traits in her own body. She then turned this new way of understanding womanhood sideways by questioning the imbalance between physical and intellectual equality of men and women.

Truth's speech is indicative of the pattern among enslaved and runaway women in North Carolina who created their own understandings of black womanhood that by merit challenged the assumptions of black, white, free, and enslaved communities. The more famous version of Truth's speech was written by Frances Gage almost twelve years after the 1851 Akron convention. While more memorable that Marius Robinson's version, Gage's rendition of Truth's words changes the meaning of her speech. "Ar'n't I a woman"[41] rewrites Truth's understanding of womanhood as a mutable identity to one in which womanhood is synonymous with whiteness. Gage's version of Truth's speech is emblematic of the issues enslaved and runaway women faced in presenting themselves as women to white onlookers, even those who may have been sympathetic to their cause. Where Truth saw herself as a woman, Gage saw her as someone deserving of being a woman but who had not yet fully achieved that status. Truth's enjoyment

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[40] Marius Robinson, "Woman's Rights Convention," *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, June 21, 1851, 4, http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035487/1851-06-21/ed-1/seq-4/. For both versions of Truth's speech and a link to resources see http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/truth-address-at-the-womans-rights-convention-speech-text/.

[41] Frances Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, April 23, 1863, 1. See http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/truth-address-at-the-womans-rights-convention-speech-text/.

and acceptance of her own version of womanhood created "the essential Truth [who] would not settle down" into either the category of hypersexualized yet masculine black or the category of pure white woman. However, Truth's presentation of herself created an image of Truth in Gage's mind where the orator became someone with the potential of achieving womanhood and in need of aid to achieve that goal. These two competing versions of Truth's Akron speech not only work in opposition but also work in tandem. As Alison Pipemeier notes, "the two versions work together to show the way one woman entered the nineteenth-century public consciousness and identified herself with the tall tale in order to define herself as heroic and powerful rather than as sentimental or freakish."[42] Incorporating a version of Gage's rendition of the Akron speech into her autobiography, Sojourner Truth rewrote herself in terms that she wished to convey to her audience. Truth's literal rewriting of her words is similar to runaway women's performances of womanhood. Like Truth, runaway women and enslaved women seeking to become runaways manipulated their individual traits to appeal to white sympathies without diminishing their individual takes on womanhood.

One other category of womanhood was afforded to runaway women as a possible role within which they could present acceptable womanhood. This role, however, was only reserved for women who appear or could pass as physically white. Women with lighter skin tones were perceived as "'tragic mulatta,' a woman noted for her beauty, her near-whiteness, and her unspeakable violation by the white men of the South."[43] The image of the "tragic mulatta" was always applied to the bodies of white-passing enslaved and runaway women. Their plights

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[42] Alison Piepmeier, "'As Strong as Any Man': Sojourner Truth's Tall Tale Embodiment," in *Women as Sites of Culture: Women's Roles in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Shifrin (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), 29.

[43] Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So it Seemed," 391.

resonated with white Northern and Southern abolitionists and "sprang from fears that if slavery went unchecked—if the southern slave power had its way—it would soon deny the liberties of non-slaveholding white people."[44] Where darker skinned runaways needed to perform symbolic whiteness, "tragic mulatta" were viewed as women akin to white women on the merit of their skin color. Aid for "tragic mulattas" did not always materialize out of sympathy or guilt but sometimes arose out of fear. These fearful abettors recognized themselves and their children in the white-passing runaway women. If white-passing women could be limited by the geographic possibilities of enslavement, then "any white person's race might be open to question."[45] Appealing to the sympathy and fears of white people created the possibility of light skinned women passing as free.

Restriction of mobility—in geographic, temporal, sexual, and spiritual spaces—defined the acceptable parameters within which enslaved and free women could move. As Wilma King notes, "the freedom of many black women was not comparable to that enjoyed by their white contemporaries, yet it was not slavery."[46] These women's uses of their gender, race, and class performances further confined them within these structures—especially those of gender and class—yet they were able to use characteristics that staged these performances to create more agency than they held before they absconded.

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[44] Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So it Seemed," 376.

[45] Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So it Seemed," 398.

[46] Wilma King, *The Essence of Liberty: Free Black Women During the Slave Era* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 1.

"[She] is a very bright mulatto woman… she said she was free…[and] may attempt to disguise herself."
- *Wilmington Chronicle,* 11 August 1847, page 1 and *The Weekly Raleigh Register and North Carolina Gazette*, 8 September 1847, page 1

"[She] is coal black."
-*The People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser*, 3 January 1840, page 3

Runaway women's experiences in presenting their womanhood varied based on their skin tone. "A very bright mulatto,"[47] Elizabeth Scott/Martha Payn used her skin tone to enhance the possibilities of her skills, alias, and connections after absconding. As historian Allyson Hobbs notes, "passing is a flexible strategy that relies heavily on class."[48] Elizabeth's qualification of being "well skilled in every department of household business" combined with her literacy made her an enslaved woman who could pass as someone born into a "respectable" and educated class. Further, while still enslaved she was tasked with duties that gave her greater access to and knowledge of social terrain. Understanding of the expectations for white womanhood necessitated the proximity to learn about it. In fact, her legal owner, who wrote the advertisement relies of the knowledge of "her mistress" to describe Elizabeth. Information regarding her skills, dress, and the "number of warts on her hands" appears to be provided by this unnamed woman. Being tasked to tend to a woman within the household meant that Elizabeth could observe "her mistress" and gain knowledge about how a white lady of class presented herself to others. After absconding, Elizabeth was seen "at Belfield and Weldon, [where] she called herself Martha Payn, and said she was free." Elizabeth's ruse of displaying a presentation of whiteness that conveyed freedom succeeded since the advertisement stated she was passing while still on the

[47] *Wilmington Chronicle,* August 11, 1847, page 1. See also *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette,* September 8, 1847, 1.
[48] Allyson Hobbs, "White is the Color of Freedom," 30.

lam. This indicates that enslaved women who had access to observe the actions of white women and were of a lighter skin tone could learn to perform the "purity" of white womanhood.

Complexions of runaway women within the dataset range from "bright mulatto…[and] a little freckled across the nose"[49] to "coal black."[50] One hundred and thirty-five of the 172 women are listed with complexions. This does not includes women who were only described as "negro" as this descriptor was applied in some instances to women whose complexions were described as light.[51] 40% of the women's complexions fell within the category dark, 16% within light dark or dark mulatto, 19% mulatto, 24% light mulatto, and 2% mustee.[52] Divisions in coloring show that women of all complexions ran away and that women of lighter complexions did not have a monopoly on the ability to escape. When grouped into divisions of women who could reasonably pass as white versus those who could not the percentages are 43% and 56%, respectively.[53] Freddie Parker found that between 1775 and 1840 in North Carolina, 47.6% of runaways were of a coloring that may have created better opportunities for them to pass based on color versus

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[49] *Carolina Watchman*, December 19, 1845, 3.

[50] *The People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser*, January 1, 1840, 3.

[51] For an example of the ways that the category "negro" could vary see the advertisement for the "two negroes. One named, MINERVA…a dark yellow girl…[and] the other, SCINTHIA…a real black." *Greensboro Patriot*, July 11, 1853, 3.

[52] The "dark" category includes women described as black, coal black, dark black, dark brown, dark complected, quite dark, real black, tolerably dark, very black, and very dark. The "light dark or dark mulatto" category is comprised of women described as bright brown, bright for a negro, brown mulatto, colored between negro and mulatto, dark and inclined to yellow in the face, brown mulatto, dark copper, dark mulatto, dark yellow, light dark, not as dark as Frank (who was described as dark), not very black, rather dark mulatto, and slight copper negro. The "mulatto" category includes a little yellow, copper, mulatto, mulatto with freckles and face blotches, somewhat yellow, yellow, yellow and somewhat freckled, yellow mulatto. "Light mulatto" includes bright mulatto, bright mulatto and freckled nose, bright yellow, light, light bacon, light copper, light mulatto, light yellow, pale mulatto, rather yellow and rather light, very bright mulatto, and very light mulatto and slightly freckled. "Mustee" includes women described as mulatto approaching red and mustee. Mustee was a category used to describe mixed Native Americans.

[53] These percentages exclude women described as mustee.

52.4% who could not.[54] While this may show a slight shift between the eras, it may be more indicative of a difference between men and women since Parker's percentages include men.

Nineteen women were suspected of passing as free and they had a range of complexions. Six women within the dark category were suspected of passing as free (32% of those listed as passing), 3 within the light dark/dark mulatto (16%), 4 mulatto (21%), 4 light mulatto, 1 mustee (5%), and 1 described as "negro." These percentages show a surprising low high amount of women of a darker complexion suspected of trying to pass as free. Where Freddie Parker found that 31.8% of runaways between 1775 and 1840 in North Carolina suspected of passing for free were of a darker hue, 48% of women between 1835 and 1860 were of a darker hue.[55] This variation between eras may be explained by changes over time, the gender composition of the data, or a combination of these two factors. Either way, the difference in the percentage of darker skinned women passing as free is significant. In the case of time being the causal factor, the variation in percentages indicates that perceptions of black womanhood were becoming more liberal in the later era. This means that women's displays of their own womanhood could better be manipulated to persuade onlookers of their humanity and the veracity of their femininity. Gender discrepancy in the percentages may show a more profound discovery: runaway women in North Carolina were less dependent on perceived race than men in establishing their physical distance from the site of their physical enslavement, which may have meant they had greater opportunities for maintaining their flights in North Carolina once they ran away. However, this

[54] These numbers include men. Parker's percentages break down into 31.6% black, 2.6% brown, 18.2% dark, 0.9% bright, 26.4% yellow, 4.9% light, 15.4% mulatto. See Parker, *Running for Freedom*, 81.

[55] Parker, *Running for Freedom*, 84.

logic also produces the converse effect: women had less opportunity than men to rely on racial passing after absconding.

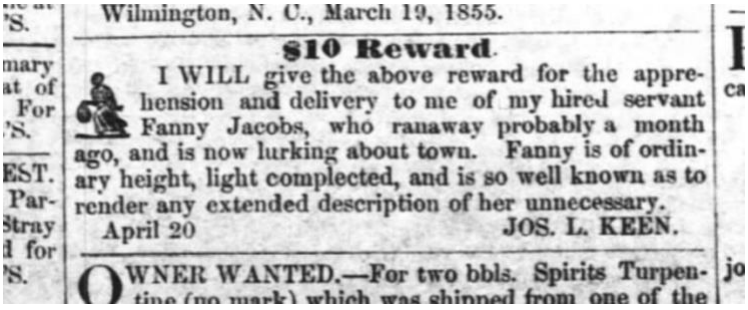
Nine of the women suspected of passing as free were also noted as potentially having a pass. Of these, three ran from Granville county, two from Wake county, two from Nash county, one from Guilford county, one from Chatham county, four from unknown locations, one from Georgia, two from South Carolina, and one from Virginia. Three were within the dark complexion category (33% of women with a pass), 1 was dark mulatto (11%), 1 woman was within the mulatto category, 3 women were categorize as light mulatto, and one woman was mustee. Simplified to the dichotomous categorization that excludes mustee women, there is an even split between light skinned and dark skinned runaways who were suspected of using passes. Additionally, 4 of the 9 darker skinned women suspected of passing as free may have used passes while 4 of 8 lighter skinned women were suspected of the same. This indicates that women's perceptions of women as "free" or "unfree" were not predicated on complexion. This establishes that women during this period could use facets other than their skin color to help them pass. Parker found that 43.2% of runaways with passes were of darker complexions while 56.7% were light skinned.[56] This indicates that the usage of passes as related to skin tone may have been effected neither by time nor by gender. This is most likely due to the non-specificity of written passes and the ease with which passes could be "borrowed, forged, or duplicated by slaves who could read and write or by white or free black confidants."[57] While obtaining a pass may have been a relatively easy feat, the limited instances in which this occurred among runaway women in North Carolina between 1835 and 1860 indicate that access to passes during

[56] Parker, *Running for Freedom*, 87.
[57] Hobbs, "White is the Color of Freedom," 36.

this time for the state was highly restricted or that there were easier means by which women could present themselves as free. It may also be a result of a fallacy produced by the small sample size of women with passes between 1835 and 1860. However, the limited numbers do establish that runaway women rarely obtaining passes.

Only 6 women's advertisements mentioned their skills. Half of these women ran away from the Wilmington region, one from Wake county, one from Chapel Hill, and one from Southampton county (Virginia). One was mustee, a house servant, and suspected of having a forged pass.[58] Two were in the dark category with one of them listed as passing for free with forged papers. The woman suspected of passing could read and write and was a washerwoman and seamstress.[59] The other dark woman was a cook.[60] One was mulatto and she was a midwife suspected of having a pass.[61] Two women were light mulatto. One (Martha Payn/Elizabeth Scott) was a sempstress, laundress, skilled in household business, and suspected of obtaining a pass.[62]

The other light mulatto categorized woman was a "hired servant."[63] In fact, it is questionable as to whether this "light complected" hired servant would have been legally



Wilmington, N. C., March 19, 1855.

$10 Reward.

I WILL give the above reward for the apprehension and delivery to me of my hired servant Fanny Jacobs, who ranaway probably a month ago, and is now lurking about town. Fanny is of ordinary height, light complected, and is so well known as to render any extended description of her unnecessary.

April 20 JOS. L. KEEN.

OWNER WANTED.—For two bbls. Spirits Turpen-

Advertisement placed for Fanny Jacobs. *Published in* The Wilmington Daily Herald *on 3 May 1855, page 3.*

"negro" or "white." Referred to as Fanny Jacobs and suspected of "lurking about" Wilmington, this woman appears to be an anomaly in the data because of the inability to

[58] *The Wilmington Herald,* September 20, 1855, 3.
[59] *The North Carolina Standard,* August 5, 1846, 3.
[60] *The People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser,* January 3, 1840, 3.
[61] *Semi-Weekly Standard,* August 11, 1852, 4.
[62] *Wilmington Chronicle,* August 11, 1847, page 1. See also *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette,* September 8, 1847, 1.
[63] *The Wilmington Daily Herald,* May 3, 1855, 3.

determine her legal race. Her skin color, the subscriber's use of a surname without mentioning a proper name, and her role as a house servant indicate that Fanny Jacobs may have been legally white. Her existence within the data is due to the ambiguity of her race within the advertisement. Advertisements tended to specify if the runaway women in question were considered white by the subscriber.[64] The advertisement highlights the vagueness of perceived race and indicates the possibilities of passing based on coloring available to runaway slave women. Fanny Jacobs's ambiguous racial status would have stoked what Mary Niall Mitchell refers to as the white audiences' fascination and scandalization with "how little distance remained between a white woman's purity and the abominations of slavery,"[65] especially since the advertisement was published towards the later part of the reign of "the southern slave power"[66] in 1855. Fanny Jacobs not only unsettles understanding of racial passing but also leaves open the question of how non-white passing runaway slave women were able to portray whiteness to their potential abettors.

Statewide and National Geographies of Escape

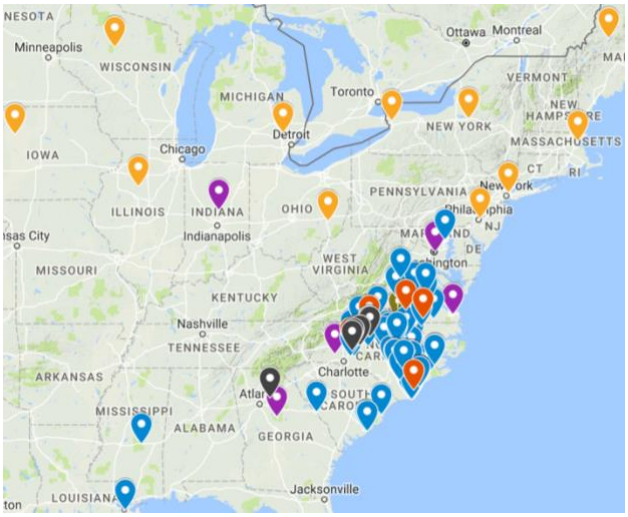
Runaway women's departure locations and intended destinations chart a pattern of choice when is came to using geography and physical space in their flights. Women ran away to a variety of locations.[67] By far, the majority of women in this study ran away to locations within

[64] This study tried to avoid including women who were white hired servants as the conditions that bound their womanhood, servitude, and freedom were much different from those that bound women of color.

[65] Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So it Seemed," 374.

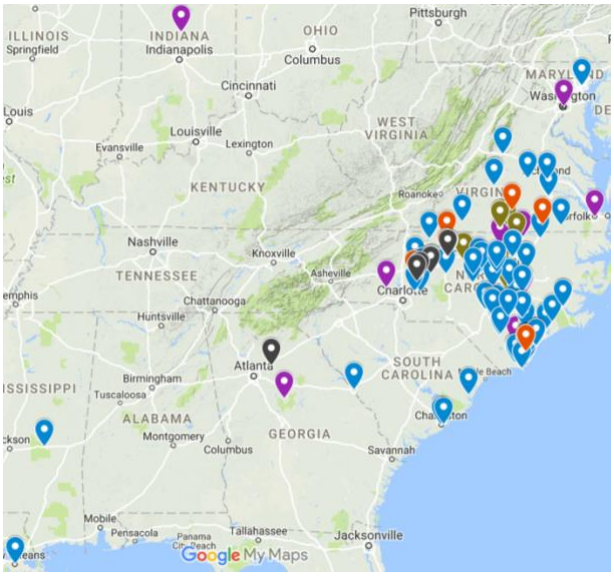
[66] Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White," Or So it Seemed," 376.

[67] For Access to an interactive version of the map, which overlays all maps in this study see, please see https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kCbXxEjKwSUS3udK10hbZUwchjziZkWv&usp=sharing.



Runaway women's destinations with arbitrary free state markers. ***Map key:*** *lightening yellow– "free state" (arbitrary map placement to indicate some possibilities). Dark orchid– destinations with non-familial connections. Yukon gold– destinations with family members. Pacific blue– no connections associated with destination. Persimmon– women seen at these locations after absconding. Charcoal– location where women were jailed when advertised in a jailor's or sheriff's notice.*

North Carolina where they did not have specified relationships with either family or acquaintances. Eleven women were suspected of running to free states, or some variation of the term, without any supplied specifics. One woman was suspected of running to Indiana, one to New Orleans, one to Mississippi, one to Baltimore, and one to Washington (DC). The remaining destinations were in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Eleven of the twelve jailors' notices were posted from within North Carolina, the one exception being the advertisement placed for Lucinda who was captured in Lawrenceville, Georgia and "says she belongs to Mrs. Louisa Eleby of Anson County, N. Carolina."[68] The others were located near Salisbury, Greensboro, and Wilmington. Wilmington was listed twenty-seven times as a potential destination in the data, making it the most common destination among the women. Raleigh was the second most common destination (tied with women headed towards "free states") as it was

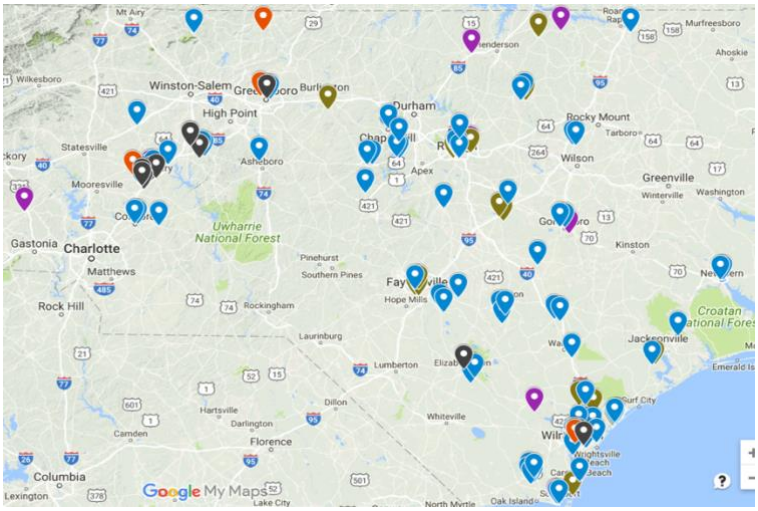


Runaway women's listed destinations. *This map shows all of the state, county, town, or smaller locations to which women may have ran with the exception of those locations that could not be located on a map.*

[68] *Carolina Watchman*, June 7, 1839, 4.

mentioned eleven times. Sixty women ran away to locations within Brunswick and New Hanover counties.[69] This number includes those who ran towards Wilmington. Twenty-one women ran to locations within Wake and Chatham counties. This number includes those who ran towards Raleigh. Fifteen women ran towards the Rowan and Davison counties region. This includes five women who ran towards Salisbury. Three women ran towards Guilford county with two of them aiming for Greensboro. Cumberland also appeared as a somewhat popular county to run towards with six women presumed to possibly aim towards this area. Four of those women were suspected of running to Salisbury.

One hundred and fifty-two locations within North Carolina were mentions as destinations for runaways.[70] This amounts to 85% of specific destinations listed for runaway women in the data. When "free state" destinations are taken into account, the 152 potential destinations in North Carolina equate 80% of the data. While this is due in part to the source material originating in



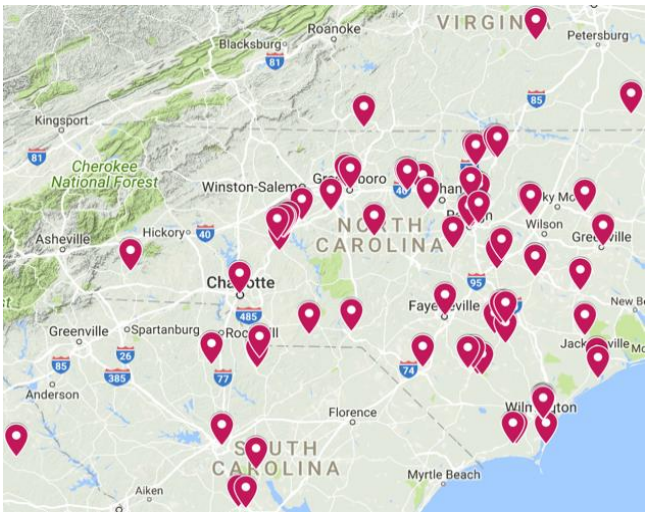
Runaway women's destinations in North Carolina. *For a map key please see the map on page 29.*

[69] County statistics in this study are based on the counties provided by the advertisements. Due to the large date range of this project, several county lines moved during this period and several counties were established. However, the general regional area is more important for understanding women's patterns and any pattern based on more specific locales is dependent on locations such as cities and towns. Additionally, town boundaries fluctuated during this period. It is the concept of running to or near a town that is important not the legality of what constituted the towns.

[70] This number includes instances when a women was suspected of running to more than one place.

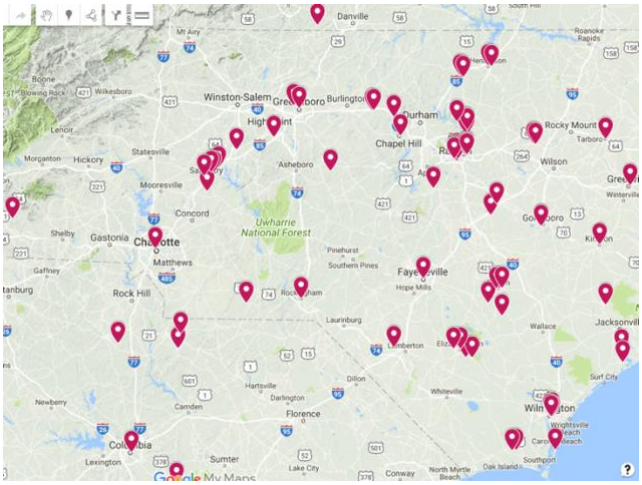
North Carolina, the relatively few instances in which women were suspecting of choosing destinations outside of the state indicates the potential for runaway women in North Carolina to sustain their flights.

Women's departure locations appear to have been more spread out within North Carolina than their expected destinations. While their destinations appear to adhere somewhat loosely to the main thoroughfares, their departure locations indicate that these women did not allow the physical location of their sites of enslavement to limit their possibilities. Outlier departure locations for women were Oglethorpe county (Georgia), Orangeburg (South Carolina), Kingville (South Carolina), Columbia (South Carolina) , Rutherford county (North Carolina), and the upper end of Nottoway county (Virginia). Wilmington and Raleigh were both mentioned as the point of departure or were the location stamp on the advertisement twelve times each.[71] For Wilmington, this is a significantly lower figure than that for the city as a destination. Additionally, only fifteen women ran away from locations in Brunswick and New Hanover counties, indicating that this two county region was a popular location for woman to runaway towards. Twenty-three women ran away from Wake



Women's departure locations. *This map shows all of the locations from which women were suspected of running. For those whose suscribers' did not specify a location, the stamp of the location marker was used instead.*

[71] Location stamps were only used as the runaway woman's departure point when no departure location was written into the advertisement. Location stamps were also used when subscribers wrote that the woman ran away from someone's "residence in this county" and the county was not mentioned elsewhere in the advertisement.



North Carolina departure locations. *This map includes one departure location in Virginia and five in South Carolina.*

county with none running from Chatham county. Seven women ran away from the Rowan and Davidson county region. This includes two women who ran away from Salisbury. Two women ran away from Guilford county with one of them running away from Greensboro. Variation in the number of women who ran towards and who ran away from certain locations indicates the importance of these spaces for women to exert visible agency over their embodiment of black "free" womanhood.

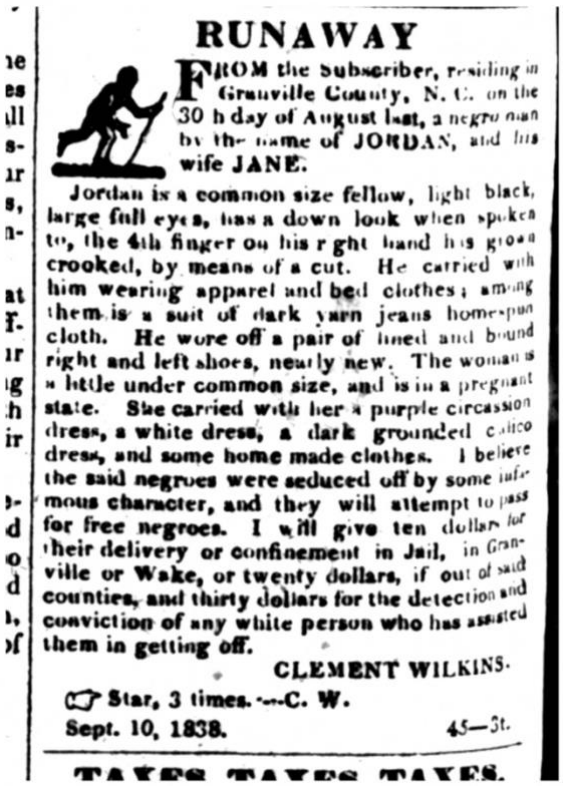
"If I failed, to what would become of me and my poor children? They would be made to suffer for my fault."

-Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, page 147

Runaway women who had family members living in another location could set their runaway destinations towards those connections, if they had knowledge of the terrain or help from those family members. Runaway women whose children lived near them needed to decide whether to run with their children or leave them behind. Some women decided to run away before having to face the tough decision of whether or not to leave their children behind. For example, Jane ran away while "in a pregnant state."[72] Her husband accompanied her as they escaped from the subscriber's residence in Granville county on August 30, 1838. Their flight appears to be motivated in part by Jane's state of pregnancy and may have been an attempt to establish themselves as "free" prior to the birth of their child. Whether Jane was already a mother

[72] *Raleigh Register and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser*, September 10, 1838, 2.

or had witnessed the limiting nature of motherhood through observing the experiences of other slave women, Jane's choice to abscond while pregnant indicates a desire to avoid further limiting her mobility through motherhood, to avoid exposing her future child to life in slavery, to exert control over her relationship with her child, or even to ensure that her child was born. The subscriber mused that Jane and her husband ran away to establish themselves prior to Jane's giving birth. He noted, "I believe the said negroes were seduced off by some infamous character, and they will attempt to pass for free negroes." Regardless of Jane's prime motivator in running away, the choice to do so prior to giving birth reflected an acknowledgement of the reality that "escaping with children only made an already hazardous undertaking all the more risky."[73] Running away while pregnant also increased the risks associated with absconding. However, Jane's choice indicates that the opportunity to abscond was more likely to succeed if she ran away while pregnant instead of with a child in tow.



RUNAWAY

FROM the Subscriber, residing in Granville County, N. C. on the 30 h day of August last, a negro man by the name of JORDAN, and his wife JANE.

Jordan is a common size fellow, light black, large full eyes, has a down look when spoken to, the 4th finger on his r ght hand has grown crooked, by means of a cut. He carried with him wearing apparel and bed clothes; among them is a suit of dark yarn jeans home-spun cloth. He wore off a pair of lined and bound right and left shoes, nearly new. The woman is a little under common size, and is in a pregnant state. She carried with her a purple circassion dress, a white dress, a dark grounded calico dress, and some home made clothes. I believe the said negroes were seduced off by some infamous character, and they will attempt to pass for free negroes. I will give ten dollars for their delivery or confinement in Jail, in Granville or Wake, or twenty dollars, if out of said counties, and thirty dollars for the detection and conviction of any white person who has assisted them in getting off.

CLEMENT WILKINS.

☞ Star, 3 times.—C. W.

Sept. 10, 1838. 45—3t.

TAXES TAXES TAXES.

Runaway slave ad placed for Jane and her husband, Jordan. *Published in the* Raleigh Register and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser *on10 September 1838, page 2. Image courtesy of N. C. Runaway Slave Advertisements database. Image can be found at http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/RAS/id/1765.*

[73] Schafer, "New Orleans Slavery," 47 quoted in White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 106.

[74] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 106.

women in this study ran away with their children, indicating a difference in enslaved women's lives and runaway women's possibilities based on location.[75] This also indicates a fallacy of historians to broadly apply Deep South enslaved and runaway women's experiences in a broader swath than they are applicable. Sixteen women in this study ran away with their own children on at least one occasion. The number of their own children these women ran away with ranged from one child to ten children.[76] Seven women ran away with one of their children or their only child, five women ran away with two of their children, three women ran away with three of their children, and one woman ran away with ten of her children. Two of the women who ran away with two of their children ran away together and were expected to remain as a group, making the total number of children with that runaway group four.[77] This is the only instance where children who were not siblings formed a runaway group. The number of their children that these women ran away with indicates that they were willing to take risks for both themselves and for their children in absconding. However, the low percentage of women who ran away with children in North Carolina during this period as compared to New Orleans in 1851 indicate that some factor or combination of factors altered the potential either for women who were not mothers to run away or for mothers to run away with their children.

The ages of children with whom these women ran away is also of interest. The range of listed ages is from two months old to seventeen years old. Thirty-seven children were listed as

[75] This percentage does not include women who were pregnant as the dangers of absconding while pregnant did not involve the same complications as running away with children. Additionally, fetuses should be categorized differently from children.

[76] The woman (Nancy) who absconded with her ten children ran away at the same time as at least three other adults. Nancy's experience is indicative of the risks women were willing to take with and for their children. For the advertisement describing their flight(s) see *The People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser*, October 13, 1837, 3.

[77] *The Daily Journal*, March 10, 1853, 3.

running away with the women in this study. Of those thirty-seven, thirteen of them were listed with an age. Their ages ranged from two months to four years and then twelve years to seventeen. The ages of the infants and newborns were most likely listed because the age of these children could act as easy markers for identifying the runaway women. The upper end of the listed ages for children accompanying women runaways were probably included to distinguish these children as "adults" for advertisement consumers. Further, the children within the older age range were described as adults like their mothers.

While the circumstances surrounding Jane's case helped absconding while pregnant become a reality, even fewer women ran away during pregnancy than with their children. Four women, or 2% of the total, took this option. Jane is the only one of these women whose stage of pregnancy was not listed. The three other pregnant runaways were "far advanced in pregnancy"[78] or "just on the eve of confinement."[79] These women who ran away towards the end of their third trimesters indicates that running away was a near impossibility for pregnant women but that doing so towards the end of their pregnancy would allow them the potential to control the terms of their offsprings' births. Compared to the listed ages of runaway children and the number of runaway children, the relative infrequency with which women ran away while pregnant indicates that the state of pregnancy may have posed a greater barrier to running away than the presence of children. However, this comparison also indicates that children between the ages of 4 and 12 were the most difficult to abscond with as none of the women in this study did so, which to some extent corroborates historians' conclusions that children had more limited geographic mobility than their parents and created a burden when accompanying runaway adults.

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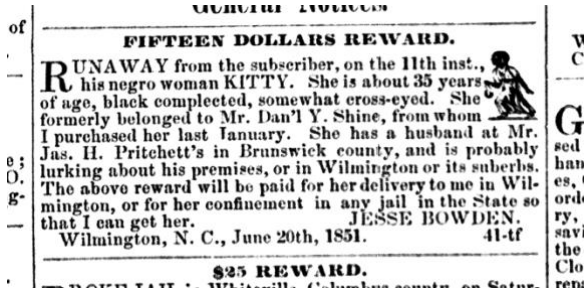
[78] *Carolina Watchman*, January 14, 1843, 3 and *The People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser*, June 30, 1837, 3.

[79] *The Weekly Raleigh Register and North Carolina Gazette*, August 28, 1850, 3.

Women in this study were just as likely to run away with their husbands as they were to run away with their children since sixteen of them did so. This number only includes women whose male co-absconders were listed as their husbands (or when they were listed as wives of the male runaways). Only two women were listed as running away with their father (this comprised one absconding group) and only one woman was said to have run away with her brother. Four women were listed as running away with their mothers. Therefore, when focusing on the types of family members with whom runaway women were likely to abscond, husbands and children appear the most important. This trend in the data corroborates the importance of these connections in determining methods of flight for women who chose to run with family members.

As John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger note, "perhaps the most salient characteristic…was courage, especially for those who ran away more than once."[80] Only three women ran away more than once between 1835 and 1860 in the North Carolina data. Two of these women ran away on two different occasions. The third woman, Kitty, first appeared in the dataset on June 26, 1851 and exemplifies Franklin and Schweninger's statement. Running away from the Wilmington neighborhood, Kitty was not suspected of ranging further than the neighboring county since "she has a husband at Mr. Jas. H. Pritchett's in Brunswick county, and is probably lurking about his premises, or in Wilmington or its suberbs."[81] Beyond this, the 1851 advertisement gives little more information on Kitty other than



FIFTEEN DOLLARS REWARD.

RUNAWAY from the subscriber, on the 11th inst., his negro woman KITTY. She is about 35 years of age, black complected, somewhat cross-eyed. She formerly belonged to Mr. Dan'l Y. Shine, from whom I purchased her last January. She has a husband at Mr. Jas. H. Pritchett's in Brunswick county, and is probably lurking about his premises, or in Wilmington or its suberbs. The above reward will be paid for her delivery to me in Wilmington, or for her confinement in any jail in the State so that I can get her. JESSE BOWDEN.

Wilmington, N. C., June 20th, 1851. 41-tf

$25 REWARD.

First Advertisement placed for Kitty. *This advertisement was published in the* Wilmington Journal *on 27 June 1851, page 1.*

[80] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 224.
[81] *Wilmington Journal*, June 27, 1851, 1.

demographics. However, Kitty ran away and had advertisements published for her six times between June 11, 1851 and February 7, 1856.[82] The individual advertisements provide no direct insight to Kitty's use of character and attitude in personas to construct space for freedom, yet her persistence in running away shows her true tenacity. Perhaps no advertisement(s) in this sample better speak(s) to the true personality of the runaway in question than the set of advertisements for Kitty. Rather than leaving a member of the slaveholding class in charge of recording Kitty's self, Kitty wrote her voice into the historical canon through her repeated flights. Her tenacity in fleeing for at least six years speaks to a larger truth of runaway women's flights: that no matter the potential repercussions, these women chose to place themselves in danger for the sake of wholly asserting their agency.

One of the most striking aspects of the Kitty advertisement series is the appearance of her daughter, Amanda, in the February 22, 1855 advertisement. Kitty's persistence and courage paints her as a solitary character, yet she acted in tandem with her daughter on what was at least her fifth escape. Kitty's experience shows that runaway women in North Carolina valued their relationships with their children but were willing to abscond without them if necessary. Kitty's saga also highlights the potential dangers of running away with a child, for both the child and herself. When Kitty and Amanda


Sept. 27.] FREEMAN & HOUSTON.

$10 REWARD.

RUNAWAY from the Subcriber on the 15th inst., his Negro woman KITTY, aged about 36 years, dark complected, and little cross-eyed, and medium sized; and AMANDA her daughter, aged about 14 years.—The above reward will be paid for their delivery to me, or for their confinement in New Hanover Jail.

Feb. 20th 1855. [142-tf] JESSE BOWDEN.

JUST RECEIVED,

THIRTY barrels of prime New Orleans Molasses; Twen-

Advertisement for Kitty and Amanda. *Place in* The Daily Journal *on 22 February 1855, page 3.*

[82] The former of these dates is the first day that Kitty ran away (according to the available ads). The latter date is the last day that an advertisement in this dataset was published for Kitty. For Kitty's second through sixth advertisement see *The Daily Journal*, January 15, 1852, 3; *The Daily Journal*, September 9, 1853, 2; *The Daily Journal*, July 13, 1854, 3; *The Daily Journal*, February 22, 1855, 3; and *The Daily Journal*, February 7, 1856, 3.

absconded in 1855, Amanda was "aged about 14 years."[83] Therefore, Amanda would have only been about nine years old the first time Kitty ran away in this dataset. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs lamented the need for her to abscond sans children stating "I feared the sight of my children would be too much for my full heart; but I could not go out into the uncertain future without one last look."[84] Written in part to stir white women into sympathetic abolition, Jacobs's narrative "is full of secret truths that seemingly lie just below the surface but will not be revealed by any pen or camera working alone."[85] Kitty's recalcitrant actions upend one of these secret truths: that life for enslaved mothers in North Carolina afforded them the possibility of asserting their agency without making "an already hazardous undertaking all the more risky"[86] by the addition of children. Additionally, Kitty's experience considering the emotional pain described by Harriet Jacobs indicates the importance and necessity for runaway women to use courage to craft a means of escape.

Women who ran away with family connections mentioned in connection to their destination mostly aimed for the Wilmington vicinity or east-central North Carolina. Wilmington was the most frequently cited destination of this type with six women suspected of being harbored by family members in this city. Fayetteville and Rocky Point were the second most cited locations with three women suspected of running to each of these locations in order to reconnect with family members. The Brunswick and New Hanover county region was most frequently cited as a location that women were likely to find family that would aid them after

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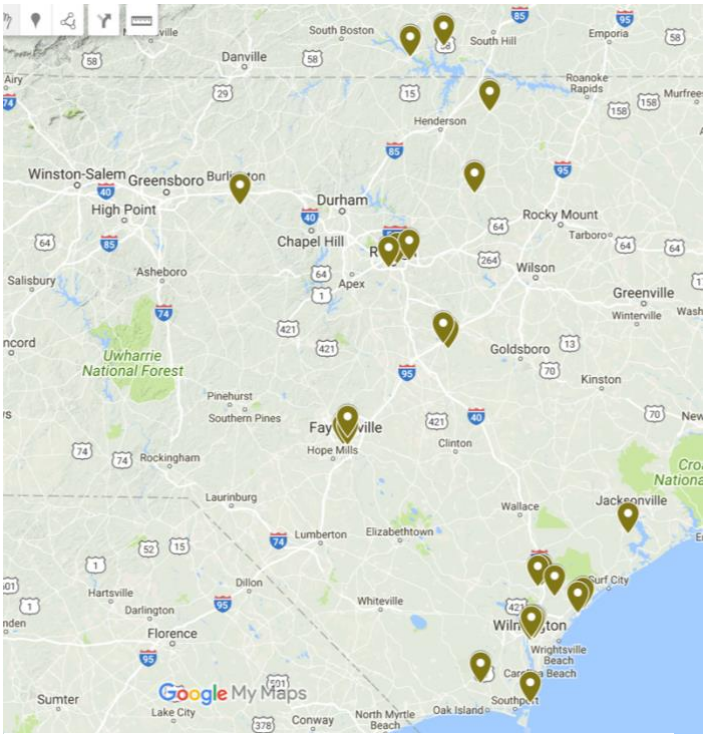
[83] *The Daily Journal*, February 2, 1855, 3.

[84] Harriet Jacobs and Jean Fagan Yellin, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000): 96.

[85] Blackwood, "Fugitive Obscura," 117.

[86] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 106.

they ran away. This included thirteen locations within the region.[87] It should also be noted that none of the women were suspected of running to family or being harbored by family in the Salisbury or Greensboro vicinities, two of the locations where newspapers used in this study were published. Only two of the women listed in Greensboro and Salisbury newspapers were listed as potentially running away towards family, and their destinations were Fayetteville and Wilmington, respectively.[88] This indicates that women were more likely to rely on the aid of family when they ran to the Wilmington vicinity of the state or when they ran to the east-central region surrounding Raleigh than when they ran to other locations.

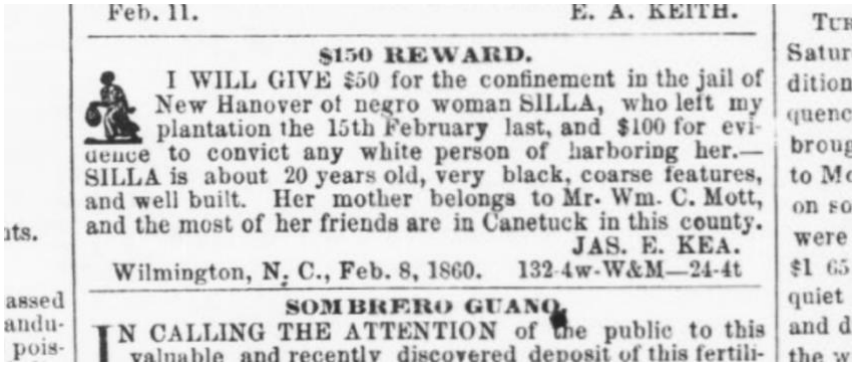


Destinations of Runaway Women with family connections at those locations. *This map show's that women's destinations with familial connections congregated in the costal region near Wilmington and the central state around Raleigh. Not all locations with family members are included with this map because some locations could not be determined, such as those that listed specific plantations or residences without including a town or county region.*

[87] The woman suspected of running to the Zeke Island–North East River location in counted as one in this case even though she is plotted on the map with two points. The advertisements states that she "has a husband called BILL USHER, employed on board Larkins' Lighter, carrying stone from the North East River to Zekes Island." This makes it difficult to properly depict her location on the map, thus the two points. However, this is considered to be one "destination" since regional destinations, such as counties, are included in this study. See *The Wilmington Daily Herald*, July 24, 1856, 2.

[88] For the woman suspected of heading towards Fayetteville see *Greensboro Patriot*, May 11, 1850, 3 and for the woman suspect of running towards Wilmington see *Carolina Watchman*, April 22, 1837, 1.

There is also variation in the family members to which these women were suspected of running. Beyond the general notation of relatives,[89] which included twelve women, mothers were the most likely family members to whom women ran. Nine women ran towards their mothers, which of the thirty-two relations to which women ran constitutes 28% of the people whom these women were suspected of running towards. This is substantial because it suggests that women runaways to locations in North Carolina felt the strongest connection with their mothers rather than with husbands or children located beyond runaways' physical sites of enslavement. This also emphasizes the importance of the bond between enslaved women. Since children's status as enslaved was tied to their mother's status, it is likely that these mothers to whom abscondees ran were either enslaved or had previously been enslaved. Some advertisements outright stated that the mothers to whom these women potentially ran were enslaved. Take for example the case of Silla, who ran away from her "owner's" plantation (which is inferred to be in New Hanover county) on February 15, 1859.[90] The subscriber wrote that "her mother belongs to Mr. Wm. C. Mott, and the most of her friends are in Canetuck in this county." Silla was absent from her "master's" plantation for a year and one day prior to the publication of the first advertisement


Feb. 11. E. A. KEITH.

$150 REWARD.

I WILL GIVE $50 for the confinement in the jail of New Hanover of negro woman SILLA, who left my plantation the 15th February last, and $100 for evidence to convict any white person of harboring her.—SILLA is about 20 years old, very black, coarse features, and well built. Her mother belongs to Mr. Wm. C. Mott, and the most of her friends are in Canetuck in this county.

JAS. E. KEA.

Wilmington, N. C., Feb. 8, 1860. 132-4w-W&M—24-4t

SOMBRERO GUANO.

IN CALLING THE ATTENTION of the public to this valuable and recently discovered deposit of this fertili-

Runaway slave advertisement for Silla. *Published in* The Wilmington Journal *16 February 1860 on page 3.*

[89] The category of relatives includes "all relations," "some relations," "relations," and "relatives."

[90] *The Wilmington Journal*, February 16, 1860, 3. See also *The Daily Journal* February 23, 1860, 3.

for her in the newspapers used in this study. The notation of her mother's and friends' locations indicates the importance of social networks in maintaining a state of self-forged agency that was physically separate from the location where these women were enslaved.[91] Enslaved women proved crucial for runaway's attempts to sustain their acts of asserted agency. Truants, who "sought temporary escapes from the oppressive regimes,"[92] relied on enslaved women to prolong their stays abroad. As Stephanie Camp notes, enslaved women "supported runaways by extending to them the meals they prepared for their families. In so doing, even women who did not run away themselves were active participants in the alternative uses of plantation space."[93] The relationship runaway women held with their mothers who lived at different physical sites from the runaway were thus another opportunity for women to sustain themselves separate from their physical sites of enslavement. Runaway women utilized their knowledge of topography near their mothers' geographical sites of enslavement to sustain their plights.

The second most mentioned group of familial relations that runaway women in North Carolina ran towards was their husbands, with five husbands mentioned as located at potential destinations. Three of these husbands lived on plantations in the Wilmington/New Hanover/Brunswick region, most likely indicating that these husbands were enslaved as well. This provides an interesting counternarrative to the existing conversation on enslaved women's mobility beyond their physical sites of interpretation, especially in comparison to their husbands' mobility. Stephanie Camp states "work that provided opportunities to leave the plantation was generally reserved for men…[which gave men better] opportunity to learn the lay of the land,

[91] For more on how enslaved women and the slave community in general aided truants and absentees see Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 47-55.

[92] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 36.

[93] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 47-48.

roads, and waterways."[94] This implies that the nature of women's enslaved duties as tasked by slaveowners and the slave communities limited their geographic mobility and, therefore, limited their ability to gain topographical knowledge and enlist the aid of outsiders prior to their flights. However, the examples of the five women who potentially ran away to their husbands indicates that the conditions of women's enslavement in the Wilmington region during this period created opportunities of learning the topography of this area. While this variation did occur in North Carolina, it cannot be used to make a comment on the pattern of women's enslavement and absconding strategies throughout the state. These five women all ran away from Wilmington, Brunswick county, or New Hanover county and were suspected of running away to a site within the two counties. This indicates that enslavement in this region could be used by runaway women to create forms of understanding their physical space that differed from women in other locations.

The remaining types of family members that women in this study were suspected of running away to were sisters, fathers, brothers and children. Three women ran away towards one sister or multiple sisters. These sisters were located in Wake county, in Fayetteville, or on a plantation that appears to have been in New Hanover county or nearby. One woman was suspected of running towards her father in Wilmington from Kinston. Another woman had the opportunity to run towards her brother on a plantation (located in an undisclosed county). One woman ran away from Wake county and was suspected of heading towards Alamance county where "she has some children."[95]

[94] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 28.
[95] *Semi-Weekly North Carolina Standard*, August 11, 1852, 4.

"Said Negro Woman is thought to be harbored by her colored friends."
-*The Carolina Watchman*, 19 April 1849, page 3

Enslaved women in North Carolina's possibilities of sustaining their flights were not always tied to family. In August of 1847, a woman "named Charity, sometimes called Charity Craige, having been raised by the late Thomas Craige"[96] ran away from the subscriber residing in the Salisbury vicinity. An advertisement for Charity did not appear in the data until the 19th of April, 1849. The subscriber provides little detail about Charity. However, the advertisement does note that Charity was "thought to be harbored by her colored friends about Salisbury and the vicinity." This indicates that Charity's role in the enslaved and black communities of Salisbury prior to her departure were vital in establishing contacts who were willing to aiding her after she ran away. Therefore, Charity's ability to present herself as an integral part of these communities was reliant on her presentations of womanhood as it connected to other slave and black people. Additionally, Charity's flight highlights the strengths of enslaved people's networks for abetting runaways. Enslaved women's roles within these networks were vital as they "performed most of the reproductive work that enabled truants to occupy their hiding places for longer periods of time than otherwise would have been possible."[97] Charity's case in combination with the role enslaved women may have played in helping her remain abroad for over a year and a half speak to the strength and importance of the separate female slave community described by Deborah Gray White.

Twenty-three women out of the total 172 (13%) were suspected of having aid from friends residing in various locations. Five women were listed as possibly running away to Wake county or Raleigh with the aid of non-familial acquaintances. There were thirteen locations listed

[96] *The Carolina Watchman*, April 19, 1849, 3.
[97] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 48.

in the Brunswick and New Hanover county region where women may have been harbored by their friends. However, this number reduces to eleven women in the region because one woman was listed with three potential locations and acquaintance connections. Non-North Carolina destinations with potential friendship relations included Indiana, Washington (DC), Norfolk (VA), and Monticello (GA).

These twenty-three women suspected of relying on non-familial aid include women like Polly who were "so well known about town, that the subscriber deems it unnecessary to give a more full description of her."[98] Polly ran away on 3 August 1845 from an undisclosed location. In Polly's case, her fame around town was a double-edged sword. Although described as of a "light complexion" Polly would not have been able to openly pass as white because of town residents' knowledge of her enslaved status. However, by virtue of being so well known around Wilmington, it is likely that Polly had connections in or around the city who were willing to harbor her and abet in her act of absconding. There were no other trends in this portion of the data save that the majority of locations were in North Carolina.

In terms of out-of-state destinations, women who had no written connections made the majority with 17 destinations. There were four destinations for out-of-state family connections and for out-of-state non-familial destinations each. Two sites were listed as places where women were seen outside of North Carolina after absconding. Both of these women were seen in Virginia. However, one of them (Martha Payn/Elizabeth Scott) was seen later in North Carolina and the other had absconded from the Virginia county in which she was seen after running away.[99] The latter of these women (Ada) had a (potentially enslaved) mother resided in Franklin

[98] *Wilmington Journal*, August 15, 1845, 3.
[99] *The North Carolina Standard*, October 26, 1842, 3.

county at the time. Therefore, it is likely that if Ada ventured outside of Nottoway county she aimed towards North Carolina. Therefore, runaway women's non-familial connections outside of North Carolina did not create a large portion of non-North Carolina destinations.

While family and non-familial connections played an important role in these women's lives and in some of their escapes, there were 84 women who ran away alone and had no listed accomplices or connections towards whom they may have run. Since 49% of the women in the data for North Carolina runaways between 1835 and 1860 had no connections, their individuality must be taken into account as a factor that made the possibility of their absconding a reality.

"[She] may now have assumed some other name"

-*The North-Carolina Standard*, 23 June 1841, page 4

Aliases mentioned in runaway slave advertisements often depict how these women were as individuals within their slave communities. Their use of aliases unique to the symbolic landscape of the slave community underscore their integration within that group while highlighting their individuality. Orlando Patterson, in his work *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, noted that slavery's core was "the direct and insidious violence, the namelessness and invisibility, the endless personal violation, and the chronic inalienable dishonor."[100] However the women in this study are proof that slavery's real meaning,[101] as Patterson refers to it, failed to fully materialize and maintain its power in antebellum North Carolina.

[100] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 12.

[101] Patterson, *Slavery and Social* Death, 12.

On the 14th of May 1841, a young woman of about 23 years of age ran away from Columbia, South Carolina.[102] She is referred to by three names in the advertisement: Candes, Mary Ann, and Elizabeth Mason. The last of these "aliases" was the moniker that best identified how she saw herself as she "sometimes calls herself Elizabeth Mason, and perhaps may now have assumed some other name." Elizabeth Mason's connection to North Carolina stems from her having been "raised in Warren County, N. C…near Shocco Springs." Elizabeth Mason used aliases as one means of creating Camp's third body that directly subverted Patterson's concept of emotional slavery. Where Patterson envisioned nameless enslaved people with no agency over their identities, Elizabeth Mason existed in at least three aliases. The first two names mentioned for this woman—Candes and Mary Ann—were both bestowed upon her by a slave holder. The subscriber's insistence that the name Mary Ann was incorrect and that Candes was her true name reflects his attempts to control this woman's first body as described by Camp.[103] Yet this runaway woman's insistence on referring to herself as Elizabeth Mason represents one method of erecting a barrier to deny the slave owner access to Elizabeth Mason's third body—the site of pleasure and resistance.[104] By referring to herself as Elizabeth Mason at times, rather than Candes or Mary Ann, this woman asserted her own agency

June 16, 1841. (☞ Pr. adv. $5 62½) 346 6t.

$30 REWARD.—RANAWAY from the Subscriber, on the 14th ult., a very light mulatto girl, named CANDES, but sold to me under the assumed name of MARY ANN, about 23 years old, of middle height, well formed, slightly freckled under the eyes, with a slight scar over one of them, with black curling hair, fine teeth, quick spoken, and intelligent. Was raised in Warren County, N. C. by Dr. Joseph Hawkins, near Shocco Springs, and sold to the Davises; lived a while in Augusta; was taken to Charleston, and purchased there from Gantt & Mortimer, by Mr. N. B. Hill of this place. She sometimes calls herself Elizabeth Mason, and perhaps may now have assumed some other name. It is possible she may have been carried off by a white man.—The above reward will be paid for her apprehension and delivery to the Subscriber, or any Jail, so that he can get her, and any information respecting her, addressed to him in this place, will be thankfully received.

J. E. DENT.

Columbia, S. C. June 3, 1841. 346 8t.

RAIL ROAD STOCK FOR SALE.

For sale, on accommodating terms, or will be ex-

Advertisement for Candes/Mary Ann/Elizabeth Mason. *Placed on 23 June 1841 in* The North-Carolina Standard, *page 4.*

[102] *The North-Carolina Standard*, June 23, 1841, 4.
[103] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 66.
[104] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 68.

by refusing the characters crafted of her by her slave owners, presenting herself as a woman of her own making, and claiming ownership of herself through a social title. Additionally, Elizabeth Mason's use of a surname may have been a means of manipulating her status as "a very light mulatto girl…[who was] slightly freckled under the eyes." The surname in combination with her complexion conveyed an image of whiteness that was physically visible. Enslaved women who used aliases not only performed acts that improved their access to physical and emotional freedom but also crafted characters whose identities they embraced and assumed as their own.

Seventeen women within this study are mentioned as using aliases, constituting about 10% of the included women. Twelve of the seventeen were referred to with two specific names while three were referenced as using three specific names. Three women, one of whom was referred to with three specific names, "may now have assumed some other name."[105] There are several ways in which women's aliases differed. One such way was a spelling difference. For example, Ritty is also referred to as Reddy.[106] This difference occurred for only two of the women. Three women's names were shortened, such as Edith who was "commonly called Eady."[107] Four women's aliases changed completely, such as in the case of Elizabeth Mason/Candes/Mary Ann mentioned above. Nine women assumed surnames in at least one of their aliases. This is the most meaningful variation of an alias an enslaved woman could assume since "surnames represented self ownership."[108] Therefore, enslaved and runaway women's usage of surnames created the possibility of asserting their agency through the act of referring to

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[105] *The North-Carolina Standard*, June 23, 1841, 4.
[106] *The Daily Journal*, December 26, 1856, 3 and *The Daily Journal*, October 8, 1857, 4.
[107] *Wilmington Journal*, December 17, 1852, 3.
[108] Amani Marshall, "They Will Endeavor to Pass for Free: Enslaved Runaways' Performances of Freedom in Antebellum South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 31, no. 2 (2010): 175, 10.1080/01440391003711065.

themselves, or having others refer to them, as people who laid claim to the chattel of their own bodies.

In *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery*, DoVeanna S. Fulton describes black feminist orality as "a form of empowerment using vocal and oral means and…the foundation of a literary tradition of African American women's writing that is the progeny of a cultural tradition of verbally articulating the self and experience."[109] Fulton goes on to apply this concept of using one's voice to create culture and experience to several runaway slave narratives including that of Harriet Jacobs. For Fulton, Jacobs's inclusion of her grandmother's spoken tale in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* reshapes her grandmother as a member of "the nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood that constructed 'true' women as pious, pure, domestic, and submissive."[110] Likewise, runaway and enslaved women's aliases defined their symbolic roles in the slave community. While some women's community names involved shortening their "proper" names or adding surnames, other women's community names ignored their "proper" monikers.

One such woman was "JESSEY ANN, (some call her Betsey,)"[111] who ran away on 9 September 1846. Betsey, who was between the ages of 16 and 18 according to the subscriber, "is supposed to be lurking around the town of Wilmington, or at Rocky Point." The use of parentheticals and the phrase "some call her" to separate Betsey's community name from the subscriber indicate that "Betsey" was a name this woman used in a community partially hidden

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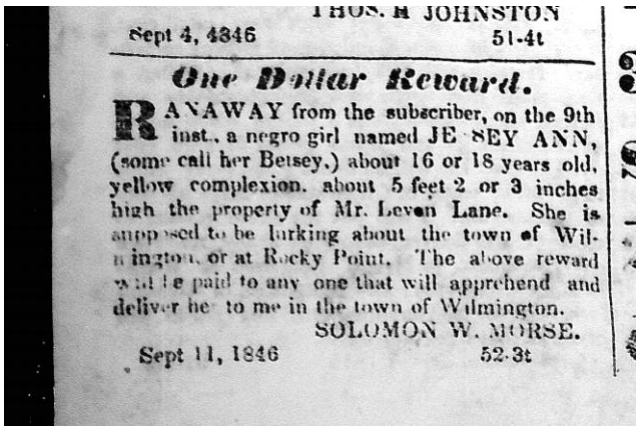
[109] DoVeanna S. Fulton, "Speak Sisters, Speak: Oral Empowerment in Louisa Picquete, The Octoroon; The Narrative of Sojourner Truth; and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," in *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006; ProQuest, n. d.): 2.

[110] Fulton, "Speak Sisters, Speak," 30.

[111] *Wilmington Journal,* September 18, 1846, 4.

from the subscriber's purview. The use of "Betsey" within the slave community indicates that who she was within the slave community differed from who she was while performing her daytime slave duties. The act of running away and the subsequent publishing of Betsey's community name inscribed the persona of who she was when she existed within an intimate community into the historical canon, much like Jacobs's written recording of her grandmother's oral tradition. Further, the people who referred to Betsey as such insisted on the importance of viewing Betsey's in the community through her connection to other enslaved people rather than as property of another person. One reason this is important is that it establishes the importance of the slave community for enslaved women regardless of their complexion since Betsey was "yellow." This also indicates that while some women were white-passing, their skin tone and ability to pass did not lessen their communal role or significance because they were still viewed by the slave community to be non-white. This reinforced the racial categorization from the bottom up; those who were enslaved were a part of the community while those who were legally free *and* legally white were outsiders. Repeated references to Betsey through vocalizing the name "Betsey," solidified her role as an individual within the slave community in the minds of the enslaved of the community, the slave "owner," and Betsey herself. Vocalization of a name for Betsey other than the "proper" name bestowed upon her by a member of the slave-owning class, gave legitimacy to how the slave community viewed Betsey and to how she viewed herself.


THOS. H JOHNSTON
Sept 4, 4346 51-4t

One Dollar Reward.

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the 9th inst., a negro girl named JE SEY ANN, (some call her Betsey,) about 16 or 18 years old, yellow complexion, about 5 feet 2 or 3 inches high the property of Mr. Leven Lane. She is supposed to be lurking about the town of Wilmington, or at Rocky Point. The above reward will be paid to any one that will apprehend and deliver her to me in the town of Wilmington.

SOLOMON W. MORSE.

Sept 11, 1846 52-3t

Runaway advertisement placed for Betsey/Jessey Ann. *Advertisement appeared in the* Wilmington Journal *on 18 September 1846, page 4.*

By publishing the community name of Betsey, the subscriber and the newspaper further legitimized Betsey and the slave community's way of seeing her. This inclusion of an unwritten method of remembering and experiencing is an assertion that the alternative histories constructed by Jacobs's grandmother and by enslaved women who utilized aliases hold equal legitimacy to histories recorded in linear format. The implementation of aliases aligns with the concept of black feminist orality because it uses one or two words, spoken to describe an individual, that counter the narrative placed on that person by slaveowners' claims to ownership of their bodies. In effect, the use of an alias utilizes black feminist orality to present personal, ancestral, and communal histories. The donning of secondary and tertiary aliases represents a microcosm of black feminist orality where "African American women have consistently employed African American experiences—embedded within lived or imagined experiences—to relate not only the pain, degradation, and oppression of slavery, but also to celebrate the subversions, struggles, and triumphs of Black experience in the midst of slavery."[112] Therefore, the usage of aliases created meaning of these women's roles within the slave community while defining them as people with agency over their femininity.

"He may attempt to pass in free clothing, as his wife is a free woman"

-*Weekly Raleigh Register and North Carolina Gazette*, 30 April 1847, page 1

Runaway women in North Carolina sustained higher possibilities of running away than women in other locations.[113] However, even within the slave community in North Carolina,

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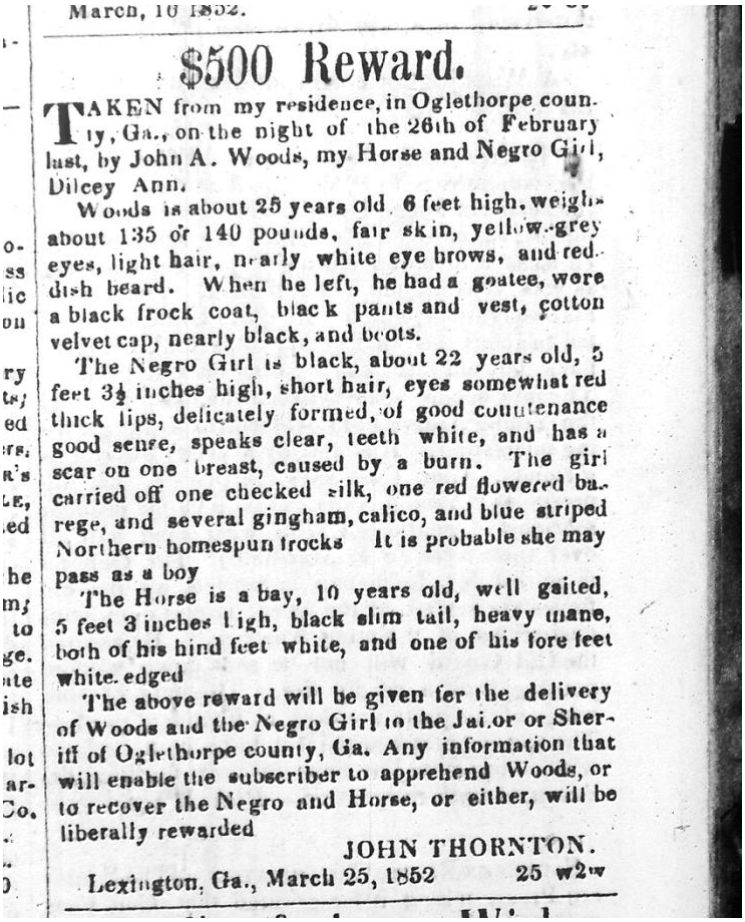
[112] DoVeanna S. Fulton, "Introduction," in *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006; ProQuest, n.d.): 3.

[113] 3% more of runaways in North Carolina than in the South were women. For percentage comparisons refer back to Parker, *Running for Freedom,* 69 and Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves,* 211.

runaway and enslaved women faced tremendous barriers to being accepted and respected as women. Not all runaway women adhered to the gendered features commonly aligned with their biological sex during this period. On the 26th of February 1852, Dilcey Ann ran away from a residence in Oglethorpe county, Georgia accompanied by a man and a horse. No suspected destination was listed for the trio, but the placement of the advertisement in the *Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette* indicates the subscriber had reason to believe consumers of the paper might have encountered Dilcey Ann in person. She was described as "black…[with] short hair…delicately formed, of good countenance good sense, speaks clear."[114] Dilcey Ann was suspected by her legal owner of defying gender norms since it was "probable she may pass as a boy." Dilcey Ann shirked the concept of embracing her "master's" understanding of proper femininity while she was still enslaved to allude to her legal owner that she would be more than willing to trespass into the territory of masculine performance. However, Dilcey Ann's gender transformation may have



March, 10 1852.

$500 Reward.

TAKEN from my residence, in Oglethorpe county, Ga., on the night of the 26th of February last, by John A. Woods, my Horse and Negro Girl, Dilcey Ann.

Woods is about 25 years old, 6 feet high, weighs about 135 or 140 pounds, fair skin, yellow-grey eyes, light hair, nearly white eye brows, and reddish beard. When he left, he had a goatee, wore a black frock coat, black pants and vest, cotton velvet cap, nearly black, and boots.

The Negro Girl is black, about 22 years old, 5 feet 3½ inches high, short hair, eyes somewhat red thick lips, delicately formed, of good countenance good sense, speaks clear, teeth white, and has a scar on one breast, caused by a burn. The girl carried off one checked silk, one red flowered barege, and several gingham, calico, and blue striped Northern homespun frocks It is probable she may pass as a boy

The Horse is a bay, 10 years old, well gaited, 5 feet 3 inches high, black slim tail, heavy mane, both of his hind feet white, and one of his fore feet white edged

The above reward will be given for the delivery of Woods and the Negro Girl to the Jailor or Sheriff of Oglethorpe county, Ga. Any information that will enable the subscriber to apprehend Woods, or to recover the Negro and Horse, or either, will be liberally rewarded

JOHN THORNTON.

Lexington, Ga., March 25, 1852 25 w2w

Advertisement placed for Dilcey Ann. *Published in* The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette *on 7 April 1852, page 1.*

[114] *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette*, April 7, 1852, 1.

been tied less to a denial of her perceived womanhood and more to the confinement of her location.

Runaway from a plantation in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, Dilcey Ann's prospects for safely escaping as a woman were slim because of "how conspicuous a lone black woman or group of women would be in an area they so infrequently traveled."[115] Further, Dilcey Ann's enslavement on a Georgia plantation held her to different gendered standards than those manipulated by enslaved and runaway women in North Carolina. Referencing an interview of an ex-slave in Georgia, Deborah Gray White noted that "he implied that [his grandmother's] work had something of a neutering effect,"[116] referring to her as "a regular man-woman."[117] Additionally, William Craft remarked that it "was almost impossible to escape from slavery in Georgia"[118] and Ellen Craft assumed the identity of her husband's master after seeing "that the laws under which we lived did not recognize her to be a woman, but a mere chattel."[119] Therefore, it is possible that Dilcey Ann's escape would not have been possible without crossdressing.

While the similarities between Ellen Craft and Dilcey Ann's escapes are striking, the difference arose from their coloring. Where Ellen Craft disguised herself as the white "master" of her husband, Dilcey Ann was suspected of disguising herself as the black boy of a white man. This indicates the relative social power of white men in comparison to black or even light

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[115] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 110.

[116] White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 109.

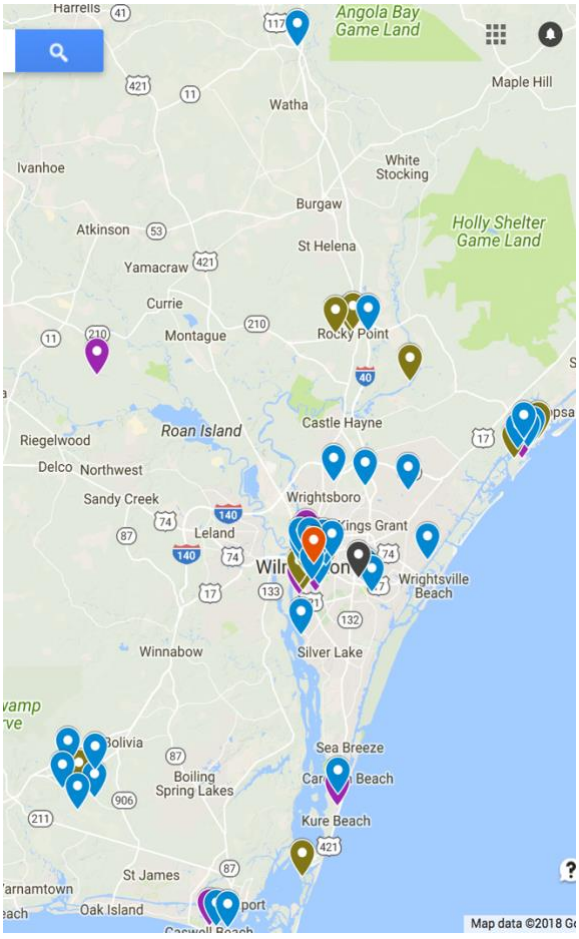
[117] George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave,* Ga., 13: pt. 4, 139, quoted in White, "Female Slaves in the Plantation South," 109.

[118] William Craft and Ellen Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*," (Auckland, NZ: Floating Press: 2009; ProQuest LLC, n.d.), 35.

[119] Craft and Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*, 36.

skinned women in Georgia in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Both of their decisions to pass as male, especially Dilcey Ann's as she was in the company of a white man, indicate enslaved women in Georgia faced greater barriers to presenting femininity as a means of conveying their freedom or "worthiness" to freedom. If enslaved women in Georgia were aligned more with masculinity than black femininity in the slaveholding class's eyes, then Dilcey Ann's potential actions of cross dressing and Ellen Craft's actualized act indicate the unique prospects for runaway women in North Carolina. The opportunities runaway women in North Carolina held to maintain and potentially enjoy their femininity reflect a wider culture that to some extent accepted a certain framework of black femininity that aligned with how these women saw themselves.

Wilmington provided the greatest opportunity for runaway women in North Carolina to sustain their flights. Eighteen percent of the potential North Carolina destinations listed were in Wilmington. Wilmington, however, was not an easy location to remain in as a runaway since the city "required hired-out slaves and free laborers to wear badges…and the absence of a badge alerted town guards."[120] Further,



Runaway women's destinations in Brunswick and New Hanover counties.

[120] David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 114.

unfamiliar black people in the port city were imprisoned "on the slightest suspicion."[121] This indicates that remaining free in Wilmington was a task that was incredibly difficult to accomplish. Acknowledging this, 56% of the women who were suspected of hiding in Wilmington had family and friend relationships in the city. The remaining twelve women who used Wilmington as their refuge after absconding needed "to rely on the complicity of men and women prepared to disregard the slave laws."[122] Wilmington, and more generally, North Carolina ports, provided runaways with unique possibilities because of the potential connections to be made both by land and by sea. Runaways who obtained positions on seagoing ships were often exploited, yet these positions "provided one of the best sources of income for their fare and access to people who might help them to arrange contacts in coastal ports."[123] Therefore, Wilmington was appealing as a destination for women who did not have connections in the area because of the ability to earn money and the potential to make connections that could further aid their escapes. For those women who had no connections in the region, it was their ability to manipulate presentations of gender that determined their potential of obtaining aid in their escapes.

Women's destinations tended to congregate in counties that contained larger towns. The exception to this statement is Brunswick county, which contained a total of ten destinations. However, this deviation in the pattern may be explained by the county's proximity to Wilmington as the city is on the New Hanover-Brunswick county border. New Hanover county contained 50 potential destinations of runaway women. Six of the destinations within New Hanover were referred to as "the Sound" and two more destinations were mentioned at Topsail

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[121] Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 114.
[122] Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 108.
[123] Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 112.

Sound, indicating that the sound region near Wilmington may have been a popular destination for runaways. The only other place in the coastal and sandhill region of North Carolina with a somewhat high number of destinations was Cumberland county, which was mentioned six times in the data. This is most likely due to the presence of Fayetteville in that county. This points to the importance of more populous areas in women's attempts to establish physical agency in North Carolina apart from their physical sites of enslavement.

Expanding the claim that North Carolina held significant importance in allowing runaway women the opportunity to forge freedom beyond the Wilmington region is the advertisement for Joe. This man who ran away from the Concord, North Carolina area at the beginning of April 1847 "may have free papers, and try to pass himself off for one of the Reeds. He may attempt to pass in woman's clothing, as his wife is a free woman. If he has her free papers, they will be in the name of Elanor Reed."[124] While Dilcey Ann and Ellen Craft masqueraded as men, it cannot be established that these events transpired because of the women's knowledge of surrounding Georgian understandings of race, gender, and freedom. Since they both ran away with men, who per Camp has less restrictions on their geographic mobility in the deep South, it is likely that their ruses relied at least in part on male observations.[125] Comparatively, Joe deduced that he would be more likely to pass as his wife than as a free version of himself in North Carolina. Joe's decision to masquerade as his wife instead of as a free version of himself indicates that black women's physical movements outside of the plantation were more lenient in North Carolina than in Georgia. This speaks to the range of agency that runaway and enslaved women in North

[124] *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette,* April 30, 1847, 1. Neither Joe nor Elanor Reed were included in the 172 women use to examine runaway patterns in this study because neither was labelled by the advertisement as a runaway woman.

[125] For more on the different restrictions of enslaved men and women's mobility see Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 28-34.

Carolina could exact and implies that their performance of gender could manipulate understandings of their propensity to break with the slaveholding class's norms. Elanor Reed's (the real one, not Joe) ability to be a free woman of color and Joe's potential preference for donning Elanor's identity to escape enslavement indicate that women of color in North Carolina may not have been as closely scrutinized for the veracity of their freedom once they were on the lam or free.

Michael ran away from Waynesborough in January of 1838 and was suspected of hiding in Johnson or Wayne county. She is listed in an advertisement with her one year old child, a seventeen year old woman, and a man. Although the subscriber notes that "in short, the above negroes are all of one family,"[126] it is stated that the women and child separated from the man as he attempted to reach a free state. This family separation in combination with Joe's passing as Elanor Reed provide examples in both the piedmont and sandhill regions of the state where runaways determined that it was safer for black women than it was for black men in North Carolina. This discovery indicates that Camp's understanding of containment geography is not fully applicable to "free" or runaway women in North Carolina.

Michael's "very bold and open countenance"[127] so disrupted her namer's perception of black femininity that he or she bestowed Michael with a masculine name that attempted to deny Michael the right to access her own constructs of womanhood. This naming occurred in what Camp refers to as the first interpretation of an enslaved person's body—"the site of domination."[128] Michael's namer attempted to redefine the intimidating aspects of her persona as evidence of Michael's failure to conform to a subservient feminine role. Yet as much as

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[126] *The People's Press & Weekly Advertiser*, June, 1, 1838, 4.
[127] *The People's Press & Weekly Advertiser*, June, 1, 1838, 4.
[128] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 66.

Michael's name tried to denigrate the agency Michael expressed while enslaved, her use of and access to her own constructs of femininity allowed Michael to access Camp's third body—the "site of pleasure and resistance."[129] Michael's role as the mother of at least one child refutes her owner's claim to domination. Her implied self-confidence through the phrase "bold and masculine countenance," her name, and her role as a mother disrupted any acceptable form of black womanhood or black motherhood during this period. This means that Michael was a woman whose body and being was not easily claimed by a master, whose body was inaccessible as a site of domination, and who so successfully claimed her body as a site of pleasure and resistance that she could not be confined by the prescribed expressions of black femininity. In this way, Michael's femininity was a fugitive, hidden from the master's limited scope for understanding the constructs of black womanhood, allowing Michael the freedom to forge an identity separate from the parameters of a slaveholding class, even while she was still enslaved.

Runaways.

$50 REWARD.

RAN away from the subscriber about the first of January last, four negroes, to wit:—a negro fellow CALVIN, a bright mulatto, about twenty five years of age, about five feet five or six inches high, rather stout. He has small spots on his face, resembling the pustules occasioned by the smallpox. He has a downcast look; but when spoken to speaks rather quick. He can write a legible hand, and has a brother that can write a very good hand. The probability is, that he has obtained a free pass, and may be trying to pass as a free man, where he is not known, or may be endeavoring to get to some free State.

MICHAEL is a negro woman about thirty years of age, rather dark mulatto, and has a very bold and masculine countenance. She carried off a child, MARY, about twelve months of age. The child could walk when she left.

LEVIL is a bright mulatto, about seventeen years of age. She has a very pleasing countenance, speaks mildly when in common conversation—in short, the above negroes are all of one family.

It is expected they are lurking about Robert W. McKinn's, in Johnson county, where all their relations live, or about the Cross Roads, in Wayne county, near James Everitt, Silas Casey, and others, where they were raised.

The above reward will be given for the delivery of the above negroes to me, or their being confined in jail, so that I get them again

JAMES McKINN, Guardian.

Waynesborough, May 16th, 1838. 123 tf

[Standard]

$20 REWARD

Advertisement place for Michael and Levil.
Advertisement was placed in The People's Press and Wilmington Advertiser *on 1 June 1838, page 4.*

[129] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 68.

black femininity. Potentially the daughter of Michael as "the above negroes are all of one family," Levil was depicted by her legal owner as possessing a "pleasing countenance." Set against the "bold and masculine" depiction of Michael, Levil's described countenance both heightens the implied femininity of Levil and the stated masculinity of Michael. Where Michael refused to conform to expected notions of black womanhood and instead embraced her own definition of womanhood, Levil enlisted a "performance of whiteness" by embracing the "ideals of the white slaveholding class" as a means of obtaining freedom while still enslaved.[130] The depiction of Michael as crossing gender lines is further exaggerated by Levil's perceived tendency to speak "mildly when in conversation." Their contrasting descriptions further exaggerate the personas the two women presented to their legal owner. Levil's embrace of a persona that mimicked accepted norms of black femininity makes Michael's rejection of the role prescribed for her by the subscriber more apparent. Likewise, Levil appears more timid and submissive when described next to Michael's brazen embrace of her form of black womanhood. This makes Levil more representative of slaveowner stereotypes for white femininity and Michael reflective of slaveowners' attempts to view black women as masculine with female reproductive capacities.

Levil provides a more apt depiction of runaway women's performances of gender than Michael. Most women in the data performed gender within the confines of expected notions or desires for femininity set out by the slaveholding class. Their performances of gender and the way they manifested femininity to others, were bound by the confining social structures that defined women as secondary to men. Escaping the social confines of enslavement meant re-ascribing to a set of confining movements and presentations of the self that defined acceptable

[130] Marshall, "'They will Endeavor to Pass for Free,'" 165.

womanhoods. Their repetitive performances of these socially confining aspects were bound by the reality "that the very formation of subjects, the very formation of persons, *presupposes* gender in a certain way—that gender is not to be chosen and that 'performativity' is not a radical choice and it's not voluntarism."[131] Therefore, while runaway women's "performances" of gender created the possibility that others would view them as women "worthy" of aid in absconding, these displays of femininity forced runaway women into social parameters that restricted white women's symbolic movement.

Descriptions of Levil indicate how runaway women could be "marked female,"[132] not fully woman as exemplified by "ideal feminine purity, submissiveness, and Christian faith,"[133] but with the potential to been seen by others as that pinnacle of purity. Further, Levil was a "light mulatto" and (potentially) the daughter of a "rather dark mulatto" woman (Michael), who was viewed as emblematic of racial stereotypes that attempted to strip black women of their womanhood and redefine them as black men with the capacity to bear children. This tension of race and gender performances would have troubled white and black onlookers' presuppositions of race and gender, revealing the categories as mutable, unstable, and a threat to the social order of race and gender as the core structures around which slavery and black communities operated.

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[131] Butler, "The Body You Want," 84.

[132] Donna Haraway, "Ecce Homo, Ain't (Ar'n't) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Others," 93.

[133] Mitchell, "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So it Seemed," 386.

June 16th.

$50 REWARD.

RANAWAY from the subscriber on the 14th June a bright MULATTO GIRL, about 23 or 24 years of age, likely and well dressed. Her mistress thinks she usually wore a gentleman's gold shirt button in her bosom, had a portmanteau or travelling bag, her front teeth are large and prominent and are sparated, long straight black hair, and had a number of warts on her hands. Her object I persume is to go north. She was seen to take the southern train at Belfield, a few day after she left home but this probably was a ruse, and may turn back, as she, must I think be trying to get to a free State. I am not aware of any good cause for her leaving, save the love of liberty. There are no marks remembered, as she has never been whipped in her life that I know of. She called herself at Belfield, Martha Payn, and said she was free, and may have a pass of some sort. Her proper name is ELIZABETH, and sometimes calls herself Elizabeth Scott. Some of her clothes are probably marked with the letters E. S.

I will pay $50 to any person who will confine her in jail so that I get her again.

T. J. PRETLOW.

Southampton county, Va. Aug. 4th. 429-4t.

FOR SALE

Runaway slave advertisement for Elizabeth Scott/Martha Payn. *Advertisement placed in the* Wilmington Chronicle *on 11 August 1847, page 1.*

The woman who went by Martha Payn and Elizabeth Scott manipulated the site of dominance from within by performing a concept of womanhood that aligned with the slaveholding class's expectations of femininity. By using her body as a stage on which she could perform different concepts of femininity, Elizabeth created varying interpretations of herself that manipulated perceptions of race, class, and gender. Elizabeth's tendency to wear "a gentleman's gold shirt button in her bosom"[134] evoked a deference to masculine authority as perceived by a slaveholding class. Further, her ownership of this perceived masculine object rejected male slaveholding claims to her body by implying that her body and person belonged to another man. Elizabeth played into the expected structures of enslaved women's lives—that they were property of men—to access her forms of Camp's third and second interpretations of the body. She permitted a slaveholding class to access her body as a site of domination, yet used that class's understanding of masculine property to limit the need to use her body as a vehicle for coping with physical and emotional violence. Elizabeth's performed femininity aligns with Judith Butler's theory that to become a woman means to "induce the body to become a cultural sign, [and] to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility."[135] Elizabeth's repetitive "gendered" actions

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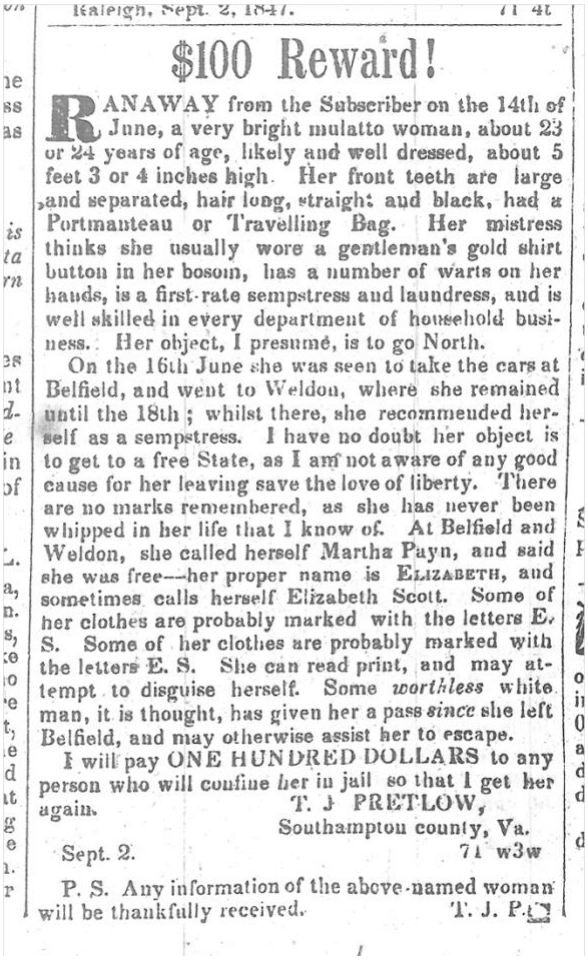
[134] *Wilmington Chronicle*, August 11, 1847, 1. See also *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette*, September 8, 1847, 1.

[135] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 522, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893.

created the possibility of being viewed not just as female but also as woman. The use of the gentleman's button in combination with her status as "a very bright mulatto…[with] hair long, straight and black" created the possibility of Elizabeth being viewed by others as a white woman. Elizabeth allowed dominant classes to believed that she had ascribed to their standards, but this image of Elizabeth as a woman who had conformed to the power clusters of race, class, and gender was a performance of these characteristics.



Raleigh, Sept. 2, 1847. 71 4t

$100 Reward!

RANAWAY from the Subscriber on the 14th of June, a very bright mulatto woman, about 23 or 24 years of age, likely and well dressed, about 5 feet 3 or 4 inches high. Her front teeth are large and separated, hair long, straight and black, had a Portmanteau or Travelling Bag. Her mistress thinks she usually wore a gentleman's gold shirt button in her bosom, has a number of warts on her hands, is a first-rate sempstress and laundress, and is well skilled in every department of household business. Her object, I presume, is to go North.

On the 16th June she was seen to take the cars at Belfield, and went to Weldon, where she remained until the 18th; whilst there, she recommended herself as a sempstress. I have no doubt her object is to get to a free State, as I am not aware of any good cause for her leaving save the love of liberty. There are no marks remembered, as she has never been whipped in her life that I know of. At Belfield and Weldon, she called herself Martha Payn, and said she was free—her proper name is ELIZABETH, and sometimes calls herself Elizabeth Scott. Some of her clothes are probably marked with the letters E. S. Some of her clothes are probably marked with the letters E. S. She can read print, and may attempt to disguise herself. Some *worthless* white man, it is thought, has given her a pass *since* she left Belfield, and may otherwise assist her to escape.

I will pay ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS to any person who will confine *her* in jail so that I get her again.

T. J PRETLOW,
Southampton county, Va.

Sept. 2. 71 w3w

P. S. Any information of the above-named woman will be thankfully received. T. J. P.

Second runaway slave advertisement for Elizabeth Scott/Martha Payn. *Advertisement publish in* The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette *on 8 September 1847, page 1.*

Elizabeth was not a woman wholly governed by the structures of a dominant class because the very act of running away indicates a sovereignty over her desires and actions. Indeed, her former owner's statement that he knew of no "good cause for her leaving save the love of liberty"[136] indicates a recognition of his inability to access Elizabeth beyond Camp's first body. Elizabeth navigated the terrain of power structures that defined class, gender, and race to amplify her ability to use her body as a site of pleasure and resistance.

As with Elizabeth, the 172 women within this study used performances of femininity to allow who they were as people and how they viewed their own womanhood to remain fugitive from white upper-class Southerners. Their very acts of running away were physical testimony to

[136] *The Weekly Raleigh Register & North Carolina Gazette*, September 8, 1847, 1.

their agency and the legitimacy of who they were when they lived as women in Camp's symbolic sites of pleasure and resistance. Their varied experiences deepen understanding of enslaved and runaway women's lives through a continued assertion of their individuality and agency. Whether they were still enslaved or on the lam, these women conducted their fugitive femininity to express their love for liberty.

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